THE MARRIED LIFE OF HELEN AND WARREN

MABEL HERBERT URNER

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THE MARRIED LIFE OF HELEN AND WARREN

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BY

MABEL HERBERT URNER

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PART I

DOMESTIC DISCORDS

THE MARRIED LIFE OF HELEN AND WARREN

The Depression of Arriving Home at Night is Unexpectedly Dispelled

"Going to get out or not?" Warren dragged off the hand-baggage while the driver struggled with the steamer trunks.

Shrinking back in the taxi, Helen was fighting the sick depression that always shadowed their home-comings.

Aroused by Warren's caustic impatience, she stepped out to the familiar surroundings that three months abroad had made curiously unreal.

The same doorman who had seen them off came running out.

"How are you, Joe? Everything all right?" brisked Warren.

"Yes, sir," grinning his welcome. "Don't you carry them bags, Mr. Curtis. I'll come back for 'em," as he helped with the trunks.

With a strange sense of detachment, Helen followed them through the hall and into the elevator.

Warren, always glad to get home, radiated a bustling energy.

"Well, here we are!" when he unlocked the door

of their apartment. "Seems darned good to be back."

He did not notice her unresponsive silence as she switched on the lights and gazed about.

The rolled-up rugs, curtainless windows, and drawn shades gave a dismantled dreariness to the dusty rooms.

How dead everything looked! It all seemed to belong to a remote past.

There, on the desk, was the address book she had laid out to take and forgotten. And there the paper and string from the box of chocolates—a last-minute steamer gift.

"Jove, it's close in here!" Warren was struggling with a weather-stuck window. "Now, where d'you want those trunks?"

"In the dining room—until I get them unpacked. Wait, I'd better put down some newspapers so he won't scratch the floor."

As she watched the man carry in the trunks, every foreign label brought back some alluring memory of the trip.

Now that magic time was over. She must settle down to the drab realities of housekeeping.

A bit of pasteboard fluttered from the pocket of her coat as she took it off.

A London bus ticket! Those long exploring rides on the bus tops! The quaint old streets—the fog—the dinginess—the lure of London!

"Dear, we WILL go over again, won't we?" wistfully. "Maybe next year?"

"Eh? You crazy? Talking about another trip before we get unpacked? What's the matter with you anyway? Look about as lively as a hearse!"

"I—I guess it's getting home at night—that always depresses me. I was hoping we wouldn't dock until morning."

"Well, I'm darned glad to get off that boat. My own bed looks good to me. Twenty of ten," glancing at his watch. "Too late to call up Stevens?"

"Wait, let me dust off that desk!" as he sat down to the telephone.

But when she returned from the pantry with the cloth, Warren's elbow was resting on the dust-coated mahogany.

"Line's busy," he flung up the receiver. "Now for heaven's sake, you're not going to start cleaning up tonight?"

"I must wipe off the worst of this—we can't lay anything down. Just look at that table!"

"Well, what of it? Got somebody coming tomorrow, haven't you?"

"I hope so. I sent Mrs. O'Grady a special delivery from the dock. And this floor! How does it get so gritty when everything's closed up?"

"How about the mail?" with exasperating unconcern. "Guess the superintendent's got it. I'll 'phone down."

"Wait, dear, open the trunks first."

"See here, you're not going to start unpacking now?"

"I've got to get out some things for the night.

And I want to hang up my dresses. The way that inspector jammed them back! He was horrid! He made hardly any allowance for wear—and I've worn almost everything I bought."

"Well, we got off pretty easy," tugging at a trunk strap. "Forty dollars duty wasn't much to pay on all the stuff you carted back."

"You always make me declare everything! Nobody else does—not all the things they've worn."

"Makes no difference what anybody else does," sternly. "We're not going to do any smuggling to save a few dollars."

"I don't call that smuggling!" with feminine lawlessness. "Dear, put these in the bathroom," handing him his shaving things from the suitcase. "And wait, take this," throwing his bathrobe over his arm.

"Holy smoke, this light's on!" he shouted back. "Haven't been in here, have you?"

The light on! Helen flew to the bathroom door.

"Oh!" she gasped. "You don't mean it's been burning ever since——"

"Looks like it," grimly. "Unless you've just turned it on."

"No—no, I haven't been near here! Oh, how COULD it have happened? I'm always so careful to see that all the water and lights are off!"

"Well you weren't so blamed careful this time! That meter's been working day and night—ever since we left. Running up a whale of a bill!"

"And it's a 40-watt!" looking up at the large

frosted bulb. "Think of it burning three months! I wouldn't have enjoyed a moment of the trip if I'd known."

"Then good thing you didn't know. Well, no use stewing over it now."

"How much do you think the bill will be? About?" at his disclaiming shrug.

"How in blazes do I know? Now forget it, I tell you! Come on, let's get things straight and turn in."

Forget it! Forget that light—burning ever since they left! All the time they were in Holland—Paris—London! All those days on the steamer!

She thought of her little economies during the trip—and every moment this 40-watt bulb had been consuming money. That remorseless meter registering day and night!

"Well, the water hasn't been running, that's certain," grunted Warren, as a rusty stream spluttered from the faucet when he started to wash his hands.

"If it had only been a smaller bulb!" deplored Helen, "25-watt is all anyone has in a bathroom—but you always want such a strong light."

"You bet I do—and I'll have it, too! Got to see to shave. But you needn't leave it burning for three months! Who the deuce is that?" he stalked out to answer the bell.

Recognizing the superintendent's voice, Helen ran out to the hall.

"Glad to see you back, Mrs. Curtis. Just came up to bring your mail. I hope you found everything all right."

"Oh, Mr. Thompson—the light in the bathroom! It's been burning all the time we were gone! I don't know HOW we happened to leave it on! I've NEVER done such a thing before!"

"Why, no, Mrs. Curtis, that light's not been burning. I turned off both the light and water the day after you sailed. Just turned them on tonight —when I saw them bringing in your trunks."

"But how—how could you?" stammered Helen. "You haven't a key! That's a special lock Mr. Curtis had put on."

"I can turn it off from the basement. I always do when any of our tenants go away for any length of time."

"Then it WASN'T burning?" joyously. "Oh, what a relief!"

"Well, that's fine, Mr. Thompson," grinned Warren. "Nothing like having things fool proof when there're a lot of women around. You certainly look out for your tenants."

"Wait, Mr. Thompson, I've something for you. Just a moment!"

Helen had brought for him only a cheap two-shilling pipe. But now in a burst of grateful generosity, she got out two of Warren's Spitalfields ties, that he had bought at an expensive Piccadilly shop.

The superintendent, beaming his thanks, said

he would be up in the morning to see if anything was needed.

"Oh, I never was so thankful for anything! He DOES look after things," enthused Helen, as the hall door closed. "I'd have been just sick over that light."

"Where'd you get those ties you gave him?" demanded Warren. "Looked like some I got at Morgan & Ball's."

"Yes, dear, they were. But the pipe I brought him didn't seem enough after he'd saved us all that——"

"Well, you've got a nerve! Buy a lot of cheap junk for presents—too blamed stingy to get anything decent! Then you're ashamed to give 'em —and you hand out my best ties!"

"But think of the electric bill if that light had been on all the time! Oh, I never was so relieved! I'd have worried myself sick over it."

"Huh, worrying's your long suit. Come on now, no more unpacking tonight. Turn on that water in the tub—let it run clear. I want a bath. What about this bed?" jerking down the sheet from the bare, red-striped mattress.

"Oh, be careful, that's covered with dust!" gathering up the sheet. "I had her strip the bed."

As Helen hurriedly got out fresh bed linen, she was conscious that the depression, the "let-down" of getting home that had weighed so heavily a few moments before, was now surmounted by a joyous relief.

And why? Nothing had happened. Everything was just the same. Only her state of mind had changed.

"Dear, isn't it strange how trivial things change our moods? I was so depressed at getting home tonight. I always shrink from getting things started —a new maid and all. And now, just because I thought that light had been burning, then found it hadn't—I'm elated! It's like losing something and finding it. You're no better off than you were before—but you're so much happier."

"Eh? What the Sam Hill you driving at?" Warren was unlacing his shoes. "No time to dissect your fool moods. After eleven—and I've got to get to the office early. Now stop spouting idiotic philosophy—and sling some covers on that bed!"

Helen's Unpardonable Blunder Offends the Author of "Jazzing Souls"

"Dear, what did Mary Blair Wingott write?"

"Never heard of her," Warren was thrusting the studs in a dress shirt.

"Oh, yes, you have. Try to think," anxioused Helen. "She's to be there tonight. We MUST know what she's written!"

"If you wanted the dope on her, why wait till the last minute?" emptying the pockets of the suit he was taking off.

"I called up Mrs. Stevens this morning. She was out, and I forgot to 'phone again. It's too late now—they always dine out on Thursday. Oh, I know, 'Sinning Saints'! Wasn't that what she wrote?"

"Can't prove it by me," with a shrug of exasperating indifference.

Hooking her blue chiffon gown, Helen ran into the library.

Hastily she scanned the book supplement, saved from last Sunday's paper.

Yes, there it was—a half-column ad. 'Sinning Saints'—but NOT by Mary Blair Wingott.

"Quarter of eight," called Warren. "What time we supposed to be there?"

"She didn't write 'Sinning Saints'," now turning through a literary monthly. "Oh, about nine. Dear, we MUST know what she wrote!"

"Don't worry, she'll let you know," buttoning his vest as he stood in the door. "Never met a writer yet that didn't spring something about their 'last book' before you talk to 'em two minutes."

"But I'll feel so awkward if we don't know. Here's what Mrs. Merwin says," taking a note from the desk:

> " 'Now don't fail to come, as Mary Blair Wingott will be here. She is most interesting. You know what a sensation her book has made.' "

"Huh, hope she's not going to read extracts from it! If she does, I make a speedy get-away. Sat through one of those author's readings—that'll last me for some time."

"Oh, I'll call up Mrs. Dalton!" eagerly. "She reads everything. Why didn't I think of her?" fluttering to the telephone.

The next moment she had Mrs. Dalton on the wire.

"We're going to the Merwins' this evening. Mary Blair Wingott's to be there. Do tell me what she wrote. . . . Oh, the 'Passionate Purple'! Yes, I remember the reviews. I should've known. . . . It came out last spring? . . . Thank you so much."

" 'Passionate Purple'," scoffed Warren, as she

turned from the 'phone. "They've rung in 'passionate' everything, except 'Passionate Pickles'. Ha, ha, that'd make a peach of a title! How about 'Pickled Passions'? That's better still."

"Now, dear, when we get there, DO try to be serious! Don't make any breaks about writers. And please don't look bored if she talks about her book. You should've seen your face that time Irene Huntington read her poems."

"Well, if this female starts reading from 'Passionate Purple', you won't have to worry about my face—it won't be there! Come on, want a taxi?"

"No, the car takes us right to the corner. I wish I'd asked if she'd written anything else. Oh, wasn't that 'Passionate Purple' filmed?"

"If it wasn't, it will be. That's a safe bet. They're not missing anything 'passionate' in the movies."

When they reached the street, ignoring Helen's economical preference, he hailed a taxi, and they were soon drawing up before Royalton Court.

Shot up to the eighth floor, they were ushered into Mrs. Merwin's pretentious ten-room-and-three-bath apartment.

As they laid off their wraps, the buzz of voices suggested a party well in progress.

Entering the large studio living-room, lit by shaded lamps and candles, they were effusively greeted by Mrs. Merwin.

"I'm so glad you could come. I want you to

meet Mary Blair Wingott. You'll find her charming."

To be introduced to a group of people was, for Helen, always an embarrassing ordeal.

An awkward moment of smiling, bowing, and mumbling of names, and she found herself seated near Mary Blair Wingott.

She was tall, thin, straight-lined. Dripping eardrops, drooping black hair, and clinging jade green velvet emphasized her trailing slimness.

"Yes. I'll have to go to Hollywood next month," she rippled on, languidly plying her green feather fan. "The casting director wants me to come out before he signs up all the parts."

"It'll make a wonderful film," glowed Mrs. Merwin. "There's so much dramatic action. You're writing the scenario yourself?"

"Oh, no, I couldn't bother with that," loftily, her fan wafting the exotic odor of Chypre. "I can't give them much time—the publishers are rushing me for my new book. I told my secretary today if they didn't stop hounding me I'd break all my contracts and go to Europe."

A nervous, youngish, gray-haired little woman, who had been listening with awed deference, now leaned forward to ask:

"Miss Wingott, do you dictate—or do you write your rough copy?"

This question launched the novelist into a glib, voluble recital of how she worked, her hours, her secretary, her recreations.

After a lengthy, uninterrupted flow of this egoistic, detailed self-analysis, Helen glanced apprehensively at Warren. Her uneasiness increased as she saw his lower lip twitch—always a sign of some caustic comment.

He was going to say something cynical! She tried to catch his eye, but he was looking straight at Mary Blair Wingott as she continued her minute self psycho-analysis.

"You haven't told us yet, Miss Wingott, on what breakfast cereal you do your best creative work," he drawled with imperturbable gravity.

Helen caught her breath, the blood rushing to her face. But Mary Blair Wingott's egotism was immune to this sarcasm.

"Cereal? I never eat cereal. Only the Continental breakfast—coffee and rolls. I couldn't create on anything so stultifying as cereal."

Again that ominous quirk of Warren's lower lip.

Another thrust was imminent.

Mr. Merwin grinned. Mrs. Merwin looked uneasy. An amused expectancy charged the air. But Mary Blair Wingott's self-complacency was invulnerable.

She was telling how for sixteen hours she had worked under one "driving, impelling inspiration". No food nor rest, only a little orange juice that her "secretary" brought to her desk.

She wrote best under the stimulus of music. Often when in the throes of an emotional scene,

she had her reproducing piano, in the next room, play an Hungarian Rhapsody.

Again that ominous ironic quirk of Warren's lower lip.

Desperately Helen broke in with a nervous:

"How long did it take you, Miss Wingott, to write the 'Passionate Purple'?"

"I beg your pardon?"

Quailing under the glacial glance now turned upon her, Helen had no choice but to repeat her question.

"Did it take you very long to write the 'Passionate Purple'?"

"Is that meant for a joke?" her voice dripped icicles. "I don't know how long it took Carol Dobbs Blake to write the 'Passionate Purple', but it reads like she wrote it with her toes in two hours."

"Oh, of course. I—I just got the wrong names," stammered Helen.

Fortunately, the arrival of other guests alleviated this excruciating situation. In the general shifting to make room for the newcomers, Helen's crimsoned confusion sought the farthest corner of a secluded window-seat.

A high-backed, near-antique Italian chair now blocked her view of Warren. But she did not care. No break he might make could be worse than hers.

A little later she saw him retreat to the next room with Mr. Merwin, where they were soon comfortably settled with cigars.

The atmosphere relieved of their restraining presence, Mary Blair Wingott lit another cigarette and launched into further minute analysis of her temperaments, her moods, and her reactions.

Even the serving of refreshments did not interrupt this fluent personal stream. Since the publication of her "Jazzing Souls", letters had "poured in from women all over the world." Her "message" had "probed deep."

"Jazzing Souls"! Helen, in her corner window-seat, bit her lips. "Jazzing Souls"! She remembered now the flamboyant ads in all the papers.

And Mrs. Dalton had made that hideous mistake! Oh, why had she asked her? She could have called up a library or a book shop.

It seemed an eternity before someone made the first departing move. Eager to escape, Helen rose to signal Warren, still in the next room with Mr. Merwin.

But there was another awkward ten minutes of leave-taking before they were out in the shadowed, deserted street.

"Well, who made the break this time?" snorted Warren. "So all-fired afraid I'd say something to crab the party. Seems to me you put a crimp in it!"

"Oh, that was ghastly! I'll never forgive Mrs. Dalton! How could she have mixed those names?"

"Talk about bone plays—you certainly pulled a whopper! That slinky dame oozing tid-bits about

her temperament—and you chiming in with your 'Passionate Purple'! Bet she loves the jane who wrote that spasm like a dog does a tin can!"

"Oh, the way she glared at me! I thought I'd go through the floor."

"Glad you handed it to her. Had us all sittin' around on our hind legs listening to her 'I-me-mine' stuff. All that lippy rot about tuning up for an inspiration. Does her mushy scenes to canned music! 'Jazzing Souls'," with a chuckle. "Jazzing Piffle!"

"And everybody read it! Oh, I should've known," anguished Helen. "How COULD I have made such an awful——"

"Well, you gave her ego a jolt, all right. And I'm darn glad of it. The crack I took at her went clear over her head—but your blunder got her peeved. Ha, ha, Kitten, the frost she threw when you pulled that!"

Then, as he flourished his cane at a taxi:

"But the next time you coach up to meet a celebrity—get your dope straight. Before you speak your little piece—you'd better be sure of your lines!"

Helen's Romance and Pussy Purr-Mew's Ruff Restore a Revolutionary Relic

A box of old jewelry. Odds and ends that she never wore.

A wrist watch past repairing, a gold-tipped leadless pencil, a ring and stick-pin minus the settings, an old class pin, some coral beads, a broken bracelet, and a small gold locket.

Broodingly Helen looked over the inadequate trinkets in search of something for the rummage sale of the Animal League.

Of all charities those for animals appealed to her most. She had already laid out an old sweater and a hand bag, but she wanted to give something more.

The locket! She would never wear it. A thin, round gold locket of her high-school days.

Prying it open with a nail file, a rush of memories overwhelmed her as she gazed at the lock of auburn hair.

Stanley Gates!

Even now her heart beat fast, though she had not thought of him in years.

Those Elysian summer evenings in her home town—the whole week but a dreamy wait for his Sunday night call. The fragrant honeysuckled air, the moonlit porch, the thrilled enchantment of it all!

The poignant anguish of that night he did not

come—the dénouement of a foolish quarrel the week before. His fiery pride and temper had been part of his fascination. The ecstatic joy of the gradual "making up."

And now this locket held all that was left of the aching emotionalism of all those summer nights.

She used to dream of his future as a great engineer—building bridges and railroads in tropical countries. His fame and fortune made, he would come back for her.

Instead, he went on the road for a wholesale grocer and married a girl in Toronto.

The tiny glass pried off, the circlet of hair lay in Helen's hand.

What should she do with it? She could not throw it in the waste basket nor leave it in the locket to be sent to the rummage sale.

"Said you wanted to make that salad dressin' yourself," reminded Nora from the library door.

Dropping the hair into the stamp box, until she could put it away, Helen hurried out to the kitchen to make the pimento cheese dressing.

It was almost seven when Warren came home, irritably tired and hungry.

"Jove, I've had a day of it!" as he peeled off his coat in the hall. "Dinner ready? Tell her to put it right on. Didn't have time for lunch."

At the table he made rapid inroads on the roast beef, spinach, and sweet potatoes.

"Dear, don't eat so fast! You shouldn't go without your lunch."

"Driven every minute. Walter Hill's here from Chicago. Shove over that celery. In all morning. Just got rid of him and started for lunch—when Mrs. Winston blew in with a hard-luck story."

"Mrs. Winston? Why I thought they were wealthy?"

"Got it in bales—nothing to do with money. But just because I'm their lawyer she runs to me with every fool thing. Winston's a great collector of Washington relics, and she—oh, it's too long a story. Trot out that spinach."

After dinner, heavy and indolent from over-eating, Warren grumblingly sat down at the library desk.

"Dear, you don't have to work tonight, do you?"

"Got to get off a letter to Heartman. Got a decent pen? Left mine at the office. Get me a blotter. Where d'you keep my paper?"

The blotter was there before him and his engraved paper in the drawer where it was always kept. But he never sat down at the desk without firing at her these same querulous questions.

"Where're my envelopes?" when the letter was written. "Got any stamps?"

"Right there in the stamp box," with well-trained patience. "Your envelopes are in that third cubby-hole—where they always are."

"For the love of Lulu! Where in blazes did this come from? Well, that's what I call luck."

Darting to the desk, Helen was amazed to find

him scrutinizing the lock of hair she had left in the stamp box.

"Reddish brown!" he chuckled. "By Jingo, that's the shade to a T."

"Warren, what DO you mean?" trying to take it from him.

"If that's not a dead ringer for Washington's mop, I'll eat it!"

Drawing a document from his pocket he held it under the desk light.

In dazed bewilderment, Helen gazed over his shoulder. To the age-yellowed paper was pinned a thin wisp of hair tied with a faded bit of ribbon.

"Not quite," comparing the few hairs on the document with Stanley Gates' lock. "Need some white to make the right mixture."

"Dear, what ARE you trying to do?"

"Tryin' to get out of hanging around a barber shop until a red-headed man comes in for a hair-cut."

"Are you CRAZY?" hysterically.

"Matching up a lock of George Washington's mane. Here's the dope:

> " 'A lock of General Washington's hair. Cut at Mount Vernon, the fifth day of August, 1796, by his niece, Eleanor P. Custis.' "

"But why should you——" began Helen, still bewildered.

"Tryin' to get Mrs. Winston out of a hole.

Started to tell you at dinner. She blew into the office all worked up because she'd lost most of this hair. Winston bought it from another Washington collector—cost him five hundred bones. Now she's scared stiff—don't dare tell him."

"Lost it? How?"

"She got it out to loan to some affair of the Revolutionary Dames. The ribbon was loose and she started to retie it. Somebody opened a door—and it blew out the window. All but these few measly hairs."

"And she couldn't find it?"

"Hardly, from an eighth story window. She put it up to me to get another lock. Said she'd pay any price. I called up half a dozen dealers in Revolutionary stuff—but nothing doing. No Washington hair on the market. She was pretty desperate by that time—so I told her she'd have to fake it."

"Fake it?"

"Dead easy! Got the document—that's the main thing. Match up the hair at a barber's. But she couldn't hang around a barber shop and was afraid to trust anybody else—so it was up to me. Now, by Golly, I'm saved the trouble."

Stanley Gates' hair! That once-cherished token of her romantic girlhood—to fill out a depleted five-hundred-dollar George Washington lock!

"But we've got to get those white hairs," scowled Warren, again holding the document under the light. "Have to fall back on the barber after

all. But white won't be so hard to get as red."

Then, as he slipped Stanley Gates' circlet into an envelope:

"Where'd this come from anyway? How'd it get in that stamp box?"

"Oh, I was just going over some old things," flushed Helen, "and I——"

"One of your old beaus, eh?" unflattering unconcern. "Did you have any old boys on your string? Any with gray hair?" hopefully.

"Warren, you can say the most horrid things!"

"Here, get down! Jove, that cat's shedding! Keep her out of my chair."

"She loves that chair," with a conciliatory pat for Pussy Purr-Mew, who was blinking at Warren, sleepily indignant at her rough ejection.

"By Jimminy, I've got it!" with a chuckle. "Get the scissors! Here's where Pussy Purr-Mew contributes to a Revolutionary relic."

"Warren, you WOULDN'T——"

"Why not? What people don't know won't hurt 'em. Just snip a bit of that white under her neck —and I'll mix up a corking specimen."

"Oh, not from Pussy Purr-Mew! Dear, it seems almost irreverent. If it were anyone but Washington——"

"Well, I don't want Mrs. Winston throwing weeps in my office. If we've got to fake it, Pussy Purr-Mew's no worse than any old soak who dusts into a barber's. Anyway, G. W. was a good sport —he'd appreciate the joke. We're not trying to

undermine his reputation. Here, Pussums, come on and make your contribution! You ought to feel honored."

But Pussy Purr-Mew, from her refuge under the couch, sensing something in the air, with feline perversity refused to be caught.

"You hold her, dear," when at last Helen brought her squirming, protesting to the desk. "Gentle, don't frighten her. Now, where do you want it from?"

"Under her neck or tummie? She's too dark on top. Here, no scratching!"

The next second a bit of long white fur lay in Helen's hand, as Pussy Purr-Mew scurried away to nurse her resentment at such predacious liberties.

"Now, you match this up and tie it—you've got small fingers. Make a good fat lock—if it looks more'n the original she can thin it out."

It was a delicate task—the mixing of just enough of Pussy Purr-Mew's white hairs with Stanley's auburn ones, to make the exact shade of the scant sample.

"Neat job!" grinned Warren. "Old Winston'll never know it from the specimen that set him back five hundred. And it's to be exhibited at some blow-out of the Revolutionary Dames! Ha, ha, wouldn't I like to see those old girls with their lorgnettes lamping that?"

"It's too funny for words," Helen tied the faded ribbon. "But it's more like the kind of thing I'd

do," pinning it to the document through the same pin-holes. "You're never tricky. You're always so square about everything."

"Nothing in this for me! Just helping her out of a hole. And I've no qualms about putting anything over on Winston. Surly old cuss!"

"But what if he should ever find out? Some day she might tell him."

"Don't worry, he's got her scared stiff. Meanest old tight-wad ever was!"

Then, chuckling, he returned the document to his pocket.

"Well, Kitten, that's the time you delivered the goods. Pity we haven't more authenticating documents—we'd turn out snips of Washington's hair at a ripping profit! Jove, that's a scream! Wouldn't old Winston tear the air if he knew? Your old flame and Pussy Purr-Mew—joint contributors to posterity!"

Helen's Last-Minute Industry Results in a Mortifying Company Dinner

"It just won't screw on," anxioused Helen, struggling with the curtain rod. "Oh, hold it tight!" as the ladder lurched.

"I'm holdin' it. Why dontcha try another one?" advised Nora.

"They're all the same. Now I've dropped it again," as the small brass end clattered to the floor. "It rolled under the sideboard—yes, there it is!"

At any other time Helen could have quickly put up these dining-room curtains. But now, because she was in a desperate hurry, everything went wrong.

And it was all the laundry's fault for not delivering the curtains when promised!

"I'm afraid them peas is dry," worried Nora. "Can I run a minute?"

"Oh, there's Mr. Curtis!" as the door banged. "Yes, you can go now."

"For the love of Lulu!" amazed Warren from the hall. "What's all this?"

"Quick, dear, come hold this ladder! She has to see to the dinner."

"Puttin' up curtains at this hour? Of all the idiotic stunts!"

"They just this minute came from the laundry. Hand me that other rod."

"Now you'd better get down from there and get dressed. The Osgoods'll be here in twenty minutes."

"I can do it, if you'll help. Don't stop to argue! Hand me that hammer."

"Don't see any hammer," glancing about with his usual helplessness.

"She just had it. There it is—on that chair."

Two pair of curtains up, Helen, tense and flustered, started on the last.

"Let that window go," growled Warren. "Nobody'll ever notice. Come down, and I'll get that ladder out of here."

"Dear, don't—you only rattle me!" running the rod through the crisp dotted Swiss curtains. "It's these ends that're so mean. Now this one won't fit!"

"Here, get down, I'll fix it."

Climbing down, she steadied the ladder, while Warren fumbled with the obdurate fixture.

"They've painted over these darned things! No wonder they won't screw on. Here, give me some tacks. I'll fix it for tonight."

Anxiously Helen watched as he drove in two tacks on which he rested the rod.

"Oh, Warren, that's not safe! It might come down."

"Do for tonight. No time to fuss now. Where d'you keep this ladder?"

"Behind the pantry door," always exasperated

at his ignorance of everything about the house. "What's that green stuff on the rug? She fixed that fern in here! Dear, run the carpet-sweeper over that. I've got to dress—it takes me longer."

"Where's the carpet-sweeper?" as he took out the ladder.

"In the pantry—where it's always kept."

In her own room, Helen dressed with nervous haste, hoping desperately the Osgoods would be a few minutes late.

A run in her *beige* chiffon stocking! A hasty dab of cologne to check it. No time to change now.

Hooking up her dress, she dashed out to the kitchen.

"Nora, don't forget you cracked that large platter—you'll have to use the small one. I hope Mr. Curtis won't get it all over the cloth when he carves."

"If them peas taste scorched, ain't my fault," grumbled Nora belligerently. "They boiled down dry while I was helpin' with them curtains."

"Just set the stew pan in cold water. That draws out the scorched taste. Oh, don't put the mint jelly in that saucer—use the olive dish. And don't cut those butter squares so thick. Oh, I've got this hooked all wrong!"

Starting back to her mirror, Helen paused in the dining-room for a final survey of the table. There, against the sideboard, Warren had left the carpet-sweeper!

Exasperated at his carelessness she thrust it into

the pantry, and was darting back to her room when the bell rang.

"Dear, are you dressed?" rushing to his door. "Can you receive them?"

"Wonder you wouldn't be ready for once," jerking on his dinner coat. "Always start some fool job the last minute. Got all week to get ready—yet you're puttin' up curtains when you ought to be dressed. Why the Sam Hill don't you——"

But not waiting to hear his explosion, Helen flew back to her room.

When, flushed and self-conscious from her breathless haste, she fluttered out to meet her guests, Mrs. Osgood's cool composure contributed to her discomfort.

And a few minutes later, as they went into the dining-room, her confusion was further increased by an overlooked box of tacks on the sideboard.

"What's your reaction, Mrs. Curtis?" Mr. Osgood turned to her. "What do you think he should've done?"

Helen caught her breath. Wondering how she could spirit away the box of tacks, she had not heard what had been said.

"Why, I—I hardly know," she faltered.

"You think he should've published that letter?"

What were they talking about?

"Why, I—" she looked appealingly at Warren.

His eyes were grimly humorous. He knew, but would not help her.

"My lorgnette! The chain's broken," dismayed

Mrs. Osgood, as something clanked to the floor.

Eagerly welcoming the interruption, Helen stooped to pick it up. What was that under it? She paused, petrified, the blood rushing to her face.

The platinum lorgnette had fallen on a clotted mass of dust! From the carpet-sweeper! Warren, in running the sweeper over the rug, had tipped it, emptying the contents. Fuzz, dust, hair, threads, pins—a repugnant mass!

Her face crimson, Helen picked up the lorgnette. Caught by a hair, the whole repulsive snarl came with it!

To longer ignore it was impossible.

Mrs. Osgood was staring with undisguised disgust.

"Oh, I—how dreadful!" stammered Helen, trying to sever the abhorrent mass. "It's—it's from the carpet-sweeper. Nora's so careless! She must've turned it over. It always comes out when you do that."

In the awkward pause that followed, Nora entered with the vegetables.

"Nora, get the dust-pan and take this up at once," severely. "It's from the carpet-sweeper—and you didn't notice it."

" 'Twasn't me that done that. Mr. Curtis came out and got the sweeper just 'fore dinner—I heard him runnin' it in here."

Helen's face grew a deeper crimson. What would the Osgoods think?

"I didn't know the darned thing turned turtle," grunted Warren, unperturbed.

"Well, Curtis, you wouldn't get a housemaid's reference after that job," laughed Mr. Osgood.

"Mr. Curtis must be a most accommodating husband. I can't imagine Richard using a carpet-sweeper!"

The supercilious elevation of Mrs. Osgood's eyebrows completed Helen's humiliation. Did she think Warren helped with the housework?

"Startin' to rain," Nora, with the mound of dust on the dust-pan, paused at the open window. "Comin' in here. I better put it down."

A scream! A crash!

The window was curtainless. A white heap on the floor.

A dazed silence. Nora clutched her shoulder, struck by the falling rod.

"Just missed that dish on the sideboard," shrugged Warren.

"I didn't touch it—just came down," Nora was ruefully rubbing her shoulder. "It's the one Mr. Curtis put up."

"Curtis, you seem to be getting in wrong to-night," chuckled Mr. Osgood.

"As a general houseworker, guess I'm pretty bum," admitted Warren. "I came home at six to find Helen perched on a ladder, puttin' up those blamed curtains," ignoring her frantic signals. "Do all women start on these last-minute jobs?"

"They'd just come from the laundry—they were

promised for yesterday," Helen plunged into profuse explanations.

"Well, what of it? What's the big rush to get 'em up? Eat in here without curtains, couldn't we?"

"Dear, this is a nice way to entertain Mr. and Mrs. Osgood. I don't know what they'll think," Helen was almost in tears.

"That's all right, Mrs. Curtis. We've been married a good deal longer'n you folks and we've had many things happen at company dinners. Molly, remember that time the plaster fell down in that three-room flat?"

But Mrs. Osgood was unresponsive to reminiscences of their early poverty.

Helen did not regain her poise all evening. Even after they returned to the library, where she served coffee and her best home-made cordial, she was still painfully self-conscious.

Fortunately, as the Osgoods were starting early in the morning on a week's motor trip, they did not stay late.

"Well, Curtis, you'd better improve on your housework, if you want a reference from me," a final cordial having put Mr. Osgood in a jovial mood.

"Huh, get housemaid's knee doin' all that work —and only ball things up," grinned Warren. "That was a nice mess I dumped out of the carpet-sweeper. Novel dinner diversion!"

"Oh, I wish we could take her along," Mrs.

Osgood stooped to pet Pussy Purr-Mew. "You wouldn't give her as a dinner souvenir?"

"I'm afraid not," laughed Helen. "We'll have to make up for our blunders some other way."

The Osgoods gone, flushed and tearful, Helen dropped on the library couch.

"Oh, it COULDN'T have been worse!" she wailed. "EVERYthing went wrong!"

"What'd you expect? Startin' fool jobs the last minute!" Warren lit a cigar with his most exasperating shrug. "Darned more important for you not to be all flustered, than to have those curtains up. So fussed you pulled that break at the table—didn't know what they were talking about."

"Oh, that awful mess from the carpet-sweeper! Her lorgnette fell right on it! How could you've spilled that without seeing it? And the way you put up that rod—just laid it on those two tacks! I told you——"

"That's right, go ahead, blame it all on me! Make me the goat! What 'bout you? Not a darned thing to do—yet you're never ready when we've anybody to dinner. Always leave everything till the last minute! Why in thunder don't you begin in time?"

Then, with a dismissing shrug:

"But what in blazes do we care? Give 'em something to talk about. Bring on your next party—we'll treat 'em to a wet mop centerpiece and dust-rag napkins!"

Warren is a Skeptical Spectator at Professor Roche's Dead-Trance Seance

"Now it's half-past eight and we're all here. Just ten of us," Mrs. Stevens glanced around her drawing-room. "Now, how do you want us to sit, Professor?"

"In a circle, please," Professor Roche, the medium, receiving twenty-five dollars for his evening's séance, settled back in a large arm-chair.

"Do you wish all the lights out, Professor?"

"No, not too dark. You can leave that piano lamp."

"That's right, Sport, join the circle," grinned Warren, stroking Mr. Stevens' Irish terrier. "If they trot out any spirits—you grab 'em by the leg."

"Sh—sh," whispered Helen, "you promised not to say things."

A guarded chuckle from Mr. Stevens, who sat next.

"I would like to explain that I am a dead-trance medium," announced the Professor. "When I come out of a trance, I remember nothing. My guide is Red Hawk, an Indian chief. The Indians, as you may know, are very psychic."

With a gesture of relaxation he closed his eyes.

His hands rested lightly on the chair arms, his head against the upholstered back.

Every eye was riveted upon him. Helen, who had expected a medium to look weird or eccentric, was amazed at his youthful jauntiness.

He might have been a haberdashery salesman. His light gray tweed suggested "snappy suits for dapper dressers". His collar, tie, tan silk socks, and oxfords were the "latest". He was fair and ruddy, with nothing of the mystic about him.

After a long silence his lips moved, but only to ask prosaically:

"Will someone play? Music always helps."

"There's your chance," nudged Warren. "A little jazz for the spooks."

"No, no," Helen demurred. "Let someone else."

"Then we will sing a hymn," suggested the Professor, as no one volunteered.

Someone started a familiar hymn. Suddenly, with a spasmodic twitch, the Professor gripped his chair. His head went back, his body jerked, his mouth opened, his face flushed. When the singing stopped, his heavy breathing could be heard.

"Me, Red Hawk, is here!" in a deep guttural voice. "Good evenin'! Say good evenin', everybody!"

An obedient, embarrassed murmur of "Good evening" from the circle.

"Me glad to be here. Me see a big chief standin' by that squaw," pointing to Mrs. Wilson. "Big

chief. Big here," slapping his chest. "Big tree! You know my talk? What you call big tree?" holding his hand up high.

"Tall. Tall," someone suggested.

"Yah, yah, that it. Tall! Much tall. Nice smile. You know that chief?"

"I—I'm not sure. I think so," stammered Mrs. Wilson.

"Him went out of earth plane with——" he coughed, his hand on his chest. "You know that chief?" persistently. "Him say you do."

Mrs. Wilson, trying to place the spirit, nodded vaguely.

"Him very quick. No want to wait. Want things much hurry. Much impatient."

Mrs. Wilson's face lit up. Her acquaintance had included an impatient man!

"Ah, you know him now! Him say him very happy. Much happy than on earth plane. Him say will come again. Him want to talk to you more. Must go now."

Mrs. Wilson was plainly disappointed at the brief, indefinite message.

"Mary! Me get name Mary. Who for?" the half-closed eyes swept the circle.

As Mary was not an unusual name, several faces glowed expectantly.

"Her little squaw. Hair like sun. Eyes like sky. You know that Mary?"

"Possibly," conceded Mr. Learned, to whom the Professor was pointing.

"What's poss-su-bu—? Me no know that big word. You know this Mary?"

"Say you think you do," coached Mrs. Stevens. "It helps to be responsive."

"Her went out of earth plane quick—too quick! Me like that little squaw. Her pretty. Like flower. You know?"

But Mr. Learned did not seem to recognize this particular Mary.

"Maybe not for you. Maybe for that squaw next to you. You know Mary?"

"Yes, but not so young," Mrs. Learned leaned forward.

"Me not say her young," quickly. "Me say her little. You know?"

"But she did not pass on suddenly. She was ill for months."

"Could it be Marie?" asked Mrs. Stevens. "My cousin Marie was killed in a motor."

"Marie! Yah, yah, Marie. Her for you! Went out of earth plane in——" he breathed more heavily, "in big wagon. Go by itself—no horse!"

"He means a motor," whispered Mrs. Stevens. "Isn't that marvellous? Yes, yes, Red Hawk, what does she say? Ask her to give me a message."

"Her say her happy—much. You must no be sorry. Her no want to come back to earth plane. Her say her love you much."

Mrs. Stevens' further questions Red Hawk silenced with an abrupt:

"I see spirit chief. Him go straight to that big chief there," pointing to Warren. "Him say him name Fred—Fred! You know Fred?"

Warren's grunt was unenlightening.

"Maybe Ed—Ed. You know Ed?"

"Guess again, old top!"

"Sh—sh," pleaded Helen, nudging him. "You said you wouldn't."

"Him walk with stick—like this," stooping over. "Him hair like ashes."

"Oh, my Uncle Ted had gray hair and walked with a cane," broke in Mrs. Norton. "His name was Theodore, but we called him Ted."

"Yah, Ted, Ted! Me no get it right first time. Him no talk Indian talk. Ted. Him walk with stick. Hair like ashes. Him say you got him face on paper."

"He means a photograph," explained Mrs. Stevens.

"Yes, I've his photograph," thrilled Mrs. Norton. "What else does he say?"

"Me got pain here," rubbing his leg. "You know him got pain here?"

"Why, he may've had rheumatism. He was over ninety."

"Yah, yah, that it. What you call? Ruma—? That it. Him went out to spirit world on sleep board. What you call?"

"He means a bed," interpreted Mrs. Stevens. "He died in bed."

"Now what d'you know about that?" amazed

Warren. "Died in bed! That's a novelty when you're ninety!"

A chuckle from Mr. Stevens, and a silencing frown from his wife.

"Hasn't Uncle Ted any message for me?" Mrs. Norton's voice was tremulous.

"Him say no more pain here," rubbing his leg. "Now him no walk with stick."

"Please ask him if I ought to sell that lot in South Orange he left me."

"No, me can NO ask questions!" with decided irritation. "The spirit him tell you — you no must ask. Him go way if you ask. There, him gone!"

The Professor leaned back now, breathing laboriously, as though exhausted.

"Me see a spirit squaw by that squaw in corner," pointing to Helen. "Her little like you. But more years. Her much kind. Her love all like him," indicating Sport, now curled up at her feet. "You know that squaw?"

"I—I think so," faltered Helen, trying to recall a deceased relative with the characteristics the medium's half-closed eyes had observed in her. "Could—can you get her name?"

"Me no see name now," again the note of irritation. "Maybe her come back with name. Me see papoose now. Her by that squaw," pointing to Mrs. Chadwick.

For over an hour the séance continued. Professor Roche obligingly remained in the trance

until a communication, however brief and indefinite, "was had by all."

Certain spirits were placed with difficulty. One whose name seemed "Betty" at first, had evidently strayed into the wrong circle. For though Red Hawk helpfully suggested "maybe Lettie, Nettie, Hettie," even "Hattie" and "Mattie", there was no response, except for Warren's muttered:

"How 'bout Fatty?"

Another spirit, one whose "mouth open big when her laugh," and who had "hair like night" and "much curl" could not be placed until Mrs. Stevens conveniently remembered her old colored "Mammy."

All questions barred, for fear of driving away the spirits, the messages were conspicuously similar and unilluminating. Generalities fairly glittered. They were all happy to communicate, and all hoped for another opportunity. Their "earth plane" illnesses they no longer had. Internal trouble seemed the popular cause of demise. But as the Professor, in locating the pain, invariably rubbed from his throat to his abdomen, the diagnosis was frequently correct.

Red Hawk's exit was dramatic. He started whistling. Then announced, "Me go now. Me come again. Good night! Good night!"

The same twitching and stentorian breathing that had preceded the séance, accompanied the Professor's awakening. At last he sat up and glanced around.

"A glass of water, please," in his natural voice. "And you may turn on the lights. It helps me come out of the trance."

An awkward silence. Plainly he was waiting for comments on the séance. "Did Red Hawk come tonight?" he inquired. "Did he give any messages?"

"Wonderful messages, Professor!" enthused Mrs. Stevens, above the murmured assents. "One from my old negro Mammy—and the things he told some of the others!"

"Oh, Professor, could you give a séance at my apartment?" purred Mrs. Wilson. "Some evening next week?"

"Here, we'd better beat it before I explode," growled Warren.

"Now, you can't be skeptical after that," glowed Mrs. Stevens when they bid her good night. "You must admit he told amazing things—things he COULDN'T have known."

"Most amazing!" grunted Warren, with commendable gravity.

But safely out in the street his restraint gave way to spluttering rage and ridicule.

"Well of all the bald, cheap frauds! And that bunch of fool women lickin' it up like a cat licks cream. 'Fred! You know Fred? Maybe Ed'," he mimicked. "Or Ted or Ned—or any old name you'll fall for."

"Yes, I know, that part wasn't very convincing," admitted Helen.

"Convincing? That punk-grammar tommyrot? You'd think he'd pull a few good stunts. But that gullible bunch'd swallow anything. Beggin' him for another séance next week! Charges twenty-five a throw, doesn't he? Easy coin!"

"But, dear, so many prominent people believe in spiritualism—there must be something in it."

"Then they ought to put the kibosh on that cheap faker. Red Hawk!" with a snort. "The nerve of saddling that line of blab on a decent Indian chief. If the real spirit of that old Kickapoo should materialize—he'd make it hot for that trance-trickster! Get his scalp! Ha, ha. I'd like to see a tomahawk chasing that spook-artist. I'd cough up the whole twenty-five to sit in at THAT séance!"

Aunt Amelia's Wedding Present Incites Warren to a Disastrous Blunder

"It's a square box—way back," instructed Helen, steadying the step-ladder. "No, no, that's a band-box! Wait, you'd better let me get up."

Nora shuffled down and Helen climbed up the rickety step-ladder to explore the top shelf of the hall closet.

"Here it is! It's heavy—you'll have to help me lift it down."

The dusty box safely deposited on the hall rug, Helen took out the hideous gilt clock—their wedding present from Warren's Aunt Amelia.

Not daring to give it away, Helen had stowed it on the top shelf of the hall closet. Now she was dragging it down because Aunt Amelia was in town.

Only once since their marriage had she been in New York. Guilelessly Helen had shown her through the apartment, only to be staggered by the blunt question:

"Where'd you put my clock?"

Always resourceful when cornered, Helen hastily explained that it was being regulated. They would have it back next week.

And now, Aunt Amelia again in New York, the clock must adorn the library mantel when she came to dinner that evening.

Helen stared at the gilt monstrosity. Two dropsical cherubs with swollen abdomens held up the oval rhinestone-encircled dial. The pendulum which swung between the bloated cupids also glittered with brilliants.

Would it run? Detaching the key tied to the elephantine leg of one of the cherubs, Helen wound the clock and started the jeweled pendulum.

To her delight it ticked on—a creaking, rheumatic tick.

Then she set the hands on the ornate dial and with Nora's help carried it in to the library. Removing from the mantel the antique mahogany clock, a real old Sheraton piece, they set in its place this rococo monstrosity.

It fairly shrieked at everything in the room. Its hideous gilt ornateness was emphasized by the chaste simplicity of Helen's old-world furniture.

Aunt Amelia was Warren's father's oldest sister—a widow, rich and penurious. Had she saved her trading stamps to buy that horrible clock?

Fervently Helen hoped she would not speak of the clock—so there would be no need to lie about it. It was enough to have it there.

Promptly at six Aunt Amelia arrived.

She seemed taller, thinner, more hatchet-faced than ever. Her love of the ornate was evident. She glittered with gold-filled teeth, jet and jewelry. Two diamond breastpins, earrings, and three diamond rings!

"I can't stand that window open on my back,"

was her first complaint when she was settled in the library.

There was no draft but Helen closed the window and lowered another.

"Isn't that a new bookcase? You didn't have that when I was here."

"Yes, we brought that from England. Isn't it a wonderful old piece?"

"Humph, must have cost a lot of money to get it over," disapprovingly.

"We didn't have to pay any duty—it's over a hundred years old."

"Does the clock run all right?" complacently regarding the gilt horror.

"We've never had the least trouble with it," truthfully.

"You were having it regulated when I was here before."

"Oh, yes. I forgot—but that's the only time." Then feeling something more was expected, Helen managed an effusive, "We both like it so much."

"How bright that gilt's kept. Looks like it had just come out of the box."

Was there a note of suspicion in Aunt Amelia's voice? Helen felt her face burn as she nervously pyramided lies.

"It doesn't tarnish. Now and then I rub it up with silver polish."

"Silver polish! On a gilt clock? I'd think that would ruin it."

"It's a new kind—and I use just a tiny bit. Oh,

there's Warren now!" eagerly snatching at this interruption. "I told him to come home early."

"Why, Aunt Amelia, you're looking fine!" was his hearty greeting.

"I haven't been well," almost resentfully. "Suffered with sciatica all last winter. I could hardly move my left leg. I'm going to Dr. Jordan while I'm here. They say he's the best. Wonder what he charges."

"Enough," shrugged Warren. "They all soak you."

Throughout the dinner Aunt Amelia expatiated on her ailments and her experiences with doctors, all of whom she claimed had overcharged her.

"What's this? Chutney? No, I like it, but it doesn't like me."

"Aunt Amelia, if you'd stir around—a long walk every day, you could pass up the doctors and eat what you want," helping himself to the Brussels sprouts.

"With my sciatica how can I walk? And I suffer so with lumbago——"

Aunt Amelia was still dissertating on her various maladies when, dinner over, they returned to the library.

Warren was plainly bored, but, having failed to change the subject, he listened resignedly to a voluble account of Aunt Amelia's operation for gall stones.

In the midst of this Helen saw him stare at the library clock. Vainly she tried to catch his eye,

riveted unbelievingly on this bedizened atrocity.

"For the love of Lulu! Where'd you get that damned thing?"

Aunt Amelia stopped short. A paralyzing pause!

"You mean that old candlestick?" with frantic telegraphic glances. "I found that at an antique shop the other day. It was so reasonable——"

"I mean that clock!" with a snort. "Of all the garish junk——"

"That's Warren's idea of humor," laughed Helen shrilly. "He's always saying absurd things like that. He knows we're both crazy about that clock—ever since you gave it to us. He's just trying to tease you."

"Oh, he is?" an ominous note in Aunt Amelia's voice.

"Do you know what he did the other day?" desperately Helen rattled on, trying to bolster up her lie. "Why—he—he asked a minister if he knew of 'a reliable bootlegger where he could get some booze'."

Helen paused for breath. Imploringly she glanced at Warren, but his head was bent over the pipe he was cleaning. Never adept at lying, he could not help her out.

"And Aunt Amelia, that minister was furious! He wouldn't believe it was a joke. You said Warren visited you one summer when he was little—was he like that then? Did he say those absurd things and think them funny?"

"Not to my knowledge," Aunt Amelia's voice was still frigid.

"I venture he was always getting into mischief," persisted Helen. "You know he just loves to say things to shock people. The most atrocious things, without a grain of truth in them! Now don't you, Warren? Admit you do!"

"That's right," he contrived a grin. "Guess I've got a rotten idea of humor." Then abruptly, "Where's that cherry bounce we made last summer? Maybe Aunt Amelia would like a glass."

"Oh, I'm sure she would," Helen rose eagerly.

"No, I'll get it. Where is it? Sideboard?"

Helen shot him an indignant glance. It was like him to make this ghastly break, then escape and leave her to smooth it over.

"You were telling us about your operation for gall stones," hoping to steer Aunt Amelia back to this all-absorbing subject.

But apparently Aunt Amelia was thinking hard. She kept glancing at the clock as she sipped her after-dinner coffee.

Helen was desperate. Should she invent further stories to prove Warren's absurd idea of humor? No, that might make it seem more suspicious. Better pass it over and get Aunt Amelia back to the gall stones.

"Did you have many gall stones?" she chanced, knowing so little about them.

"Only one, but it was very large—as big as a

hen's egg. The doctor said the largest he'd ever seen."

"Why, Aunt Amelia, how DREADFUL! Dear," as Warren appeared with the cherry bounce, "Aunt Amelia said her gall stone was as large as a hen's egg—the doctor said the largest he'd ever seen."

"Yes, both doctors said that," even Aunt Amelia's suspicions could not keep her from dilating on the size of her gall stone.

Helen, professing a breathless interest, urged her to further details.

"Did the ether make you sick? How long were you under it?"

Adroitly led on, Aunt Amelia dwelt verbosely on the operation. How she suffered when they dressed the wound, and twisted the tubes that drained the bile. Yet they said they never had a patient who stood pain so well.

Every detail of the operation finally exhausted, Helen led her back to the sciatica, which lasted until her taxi was announced.

Instead of merely seeing Aunt Amelia to the elevator, Warren took her down and put her into the cab.

The moment the door closed after them, Helen wished she had gone down too. What if Aunt Amelia, still suspicious, should say something about the clock? Warren, who could never dissemble, would blunderingly give the whole thing away.

"Is it all right?" was her tense greeting when

he returned. "Did she say anything more about the clock?"

"No, but she didn't quite swallow that yarn you tried to put over."

"It was the only thing I could think of. Oh, how could you make that awful break? The way you blurted it out!"

"How the Sam Hill was I to know? I'd forgotten she'd given us the blooming thing! Why in blazes did you have to plant it on the mantel?"

"Because the last time she was here she asked for it!" excitedly. "I had to lie and say we were having it repaired."

"By George, that's so! I'd forgotten that."

"Oh, you're hopeless! You're always making some dreadful blunder—and I have to smooth it over."

"You didn't smooth this over so blamed well," glaring at the offending clock. "That was a mighty thin story you cooked up."

"I had to say something—you wouldn't! It saved a scene."

"Yes, that was pretty awkward, Kitten," with a relaxing grin. "A tight hole to crawl out of. Best thing you did was to steer her back to the gall stones. But next time you drag out any old wedding presents, tip me off. Don't try to pull anything like that without putting me wise!"

Warren Proves a Disgruntled Guide to the "Arty" Lures of Greenwich Village

"The Zippy Zebra" was the faded black-and-orange lettering over the cavernous basement. But the door was barred and the dusty window dark and curtainless.

"That animal's defunct," shrugged Warren. "Now where?"

"There're a lot more," Helen consulted her clipping, "Where to Dine in Greenwich Village." "Here's the 'Jazzy Jug—Full of Pep Patrons and Pippins. An Intriguing Hostess'. That sounds interesting."

"Hope it's not far," complained Mrs. Stanley. "I can't walk much farther."

"Just the next street. Doesn't give the number—but it can't be far."

"Hot night for slumming," Mr. Stanley mopped his heated face.

"I thought you wanted to see the Village," resented Helen.

"Oh, we do! I'm sure it's most interesting. John's always cross when he's tired," apologized Mrs. Stanley. "And he didn't have his tea today."

"Tea?" scoffed Warren.

"You New Yorkers are too busy for afternoon

tea," laughed Mrs. Stanley. "The way you rush over here! It's amazing—your bustling energy."

Having given the whole afternoon to steering their English friends through the sights of New York, Helen resented their covert criticism.

"Well, cheer up, here we are," Warren swung his cane at the "Jazzy Jug" sign just ahead. "Doesn't look much like the Café Royale or Piccadilly Grill."

As they drew nearer, Helen's heart sank. The greasy basement of the tumbled house was not alluring. Only a dim light shone from the low doorway.

"We can't eat in this joint," blurted Warren. "Be afraid of the food."

"Why, dear, they play up this old careless atmosphere—that's part of it. Oh, look, it says 'Dinner in the Garden'—that sounds nice and cool."

"What d'you think, Stanley?" queried Warren. "Want to chance it?"

"We'll have to! My feet hurt so," wailed Mrs. Stanley. "I just can't go any further."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," sympathized Helen. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"I'll be all right if I can just sit down," limping through the doorway.

The low, sawdusted room with its red tables and yellow chairs was empty. But following the sound of voices, they came to a small cluttered kitchen.

"How do we get out to that garden?" demanded Warren.

"Right through here," gruffed the gaunt, shirt-sleeved, collarless cook.

Helen, looking straight ahead, tried not to see the soiled dishes and dubious dish towels.

"Why 'garden'?" muttered Warren, as they came out into a small, undisguised back yard, crowded with rough, weather-worn tables and benches.

From a vociferous group in the corner rose the hostess—dark, foreign, a red bandeau around her black, oily hair, a purple gown, and barbaric earrings.

"How many? Four?" her voice startlingly deep and raucous. "This table."

"Perhaps we'd better have just a drink," whispered Helen, her courage weakening.

"Best food in the Village," vaunted the woman, sensing their reluctance.

"A la carte?" demanded Warren.

"No, just the one dinner—antipasto, soup, and veal with rice."

"Rum dinner for a hot night," was Warren's ungracious comment.

"Oh, let's eat!" Mr. Stanley, not having had his tea, was disgruntled.

"It's quite a famous place," encouraged Helen, as the woman, taking their order for granted, retreated. "Some interesting people may drop in later."

"What are those supposed to be? Trees?" Mrs. Stanley was viewing the weird monstrosities with which some Village artist had decorated the fence.

"More like tipsy toad-stools," grunted Warren. "Hello, lamp that ice-box!"

The ice-box, crowded out of the tiny kitchen into the yard, required the frequent informal appearance of the red-faced brigand cook.

"Those geraniums in those salt boxes! What a curious idea!"

Half a dozen kitchen salt boxes, lettered "SALT", hung from nails along the fence, each holding a discouraged geranium plant.

"A breeze!" Mrs. Stanley ceased fanning with her "Seeing New York" guide.

"It's really much cooler out here than any indoor place," Helen, who felt unhappily responsible, grasped at every alleviating note.

"Don't lean against that fence, John! Look at your coat."

"No back to these bally benches."

"You'd have enjoyed an uptown restaurant more," regretted Helen.

"Not at all," protested Mrs. Stanley politely. "So this is New York's Latin Quarter? It's most unique," gazing around the unsightly back yard.

An old ladder, a flapping clothes-line, a rusty wash-boiler, contributed to the "undefiled atmosphere". Any pretense at decoration had been scorned. Even candlesticks were tabooed. The

candles, stuck in old bottles, spluttered weirdly.

Through the dejected, withered vines that failed to screen the open window, they caught intimate glimpses of the kitchen.

"I'd give five shillings for a pint of stout," offered Mr. Stanley.

"Guess you'd give more than that," grinned Warren.

Their spirits were slightly lifted by a generous plate of sardines, pimentoes, radishes, olives, salami, and sliced tomatoes.

The thickish soup served in crude earthenware bowls was surprisingly good.

Their strenuous sight-seeing afternoon had left them undiscriminatingly hungry. Even Helen, always finicky, dispatched her soup with relish.

A chorus of greetings from the group in the corner as another couple entered—a girl in a dizzy, batik blouse with a neurotic cadaverous youth.

"How's old Bob? How's he feeling tonight?"

"Putrid," accepting a cigarette.

"How's the play? Got that third act yet?"

"No. I'm stuck. Atrophy of the cerebral sphere."

"Hullo, Bob," the "intriguing hostess" joined them. "Seen anything of Bill Mason? Was he drunk? Well, he is now—celebrating that nude he sold. Got a bun on over at Daffy Dave's—spouted Virgil with a table cloth draped around him. A scream!"

"That girl hasn't any stockings!" whispered Helen. "That design's stenciled on her ankles. I read about it but I didn't think they really did it."

"What's that?" Mr. Stanley shed his bored apartness.

"Now never mind, John, you finish your soup."

The place was filling up. The girls with half-portioned hair, Tut earrings, vermilioned lips, and sandals. Everyone knew everyone—an intimate coterie. Most of them having dined, had dropped in to the "Jazzy Jug" for coffee.

In the general buzz Helen caught disconnected phrases.

"Ultra-modernist aesthetes . . . bourgeois socialists . . . dilettanteish . . . psychoanalysis . . . erotic . . . complex—Freud . . . soul spirit . . . shackle-breaking intelligentsia . . . sanctum of self-expression . . . kinetic vibrations."

Suddenly a long-shanked vagabond, with a saturnine expression, stood up on his bench and recited. Sonorous, meaningless lines—impassioned vaporings on "A Soul Untrammeled."

After the applauding howls, he stepped down and passed his shabby hat.

"Guess that's worth a quarter," Warren thrust his hand into his pocket.

"Kitty, kitty, kitty," Helen flirted with a big gray cat promenading the fence. "Oh, you'd be lovely if you weren't so dirty," when it finally came down to the lure of the veal she could not eat.

"Tough as rubber," Warren was struggling with

his portion. "Guess their 'pep patrons' get their chow elsewhere."

The dessert, a mixture of gritty stewed figs, prunes and apricots, was still hot, apparently an emergency dish.

But the thick, rich Turkish coffee was delicious.

"My word, that's topping coffee!" Mr. Stanley's first commendation.

"We should've dined at a regular place and come here just for coffee."

"Why, dear, it wasn't so bad," demurred Helen, still in her propitiatory rôle. "And it's quite cool out here. We might've done much worse."

"Well, let's move on. Who d'you pay? That pirate in the kitchen?"

"Why, no, I imagine you pay her. There's no menu—I suppose she'll charge whatever she chooses," anxioused Helen.

"Going so early?" the hostess left her table. "Things haven't started yet. Billy Bobson's coming over with his ukulele and Podgy Peter'll be 'round."

But not lured by these attractions, Warren drew out his wallet.

The bill paid, Helen still in apprehensive ignorance of the amount, they made their way back through the stifling cookery, and out to the street.

"It was rather interesting, don't you think?" Helen broke the awkward silence.

"Oh, very," politely assented Mrs. Stanley. "And most unusual!"

"What next? Guess we're all fed up with this flap-doodle," glummed Warren. "Let's get back to civilization. We'll take a taxi."

"The top of a bus is much cooler," suggested Helen, economically. "And you can see so much more. We can get one at Washington Square."

But the warm night had crowded the buses, and there was a constrained disconcerting ten minutes' wait before they managed to scramble on.

"Only two on top," shouted the conductor.

"You take those," urged Helen. "We'll go inside."

As the Stanleys climbed up top, Helen, glad of a few moments' relief from the strain of entertaining them, followed Warren inside.

"Oh, I'm almost dead!" dropping wearily into a seat. "We've given them the whole day—and they're so unappreciative! I think he was horrid at dinner!"

"You dragged 'em down here! They didn't want to slum around. Don't expect people from the smartest part of Mayfair to gush over the 'Jazzy Jug', do you?"

"Why she kept saying they MUST see Greenwich Village—she'd read so much about it. And she wants to see Chinatown, too—you heard her say that! Dear, DO we have to take them there?"

"You bet we don't!" grimly. "If they can't bum around on their own—let 'em hire a guide. Next

time anybody comes to New York—they'll stand a fat chance of us trotting 'em around. I'm fed up with sightseeing!" with an irate jab of his cane. "This dose of rubbernecking will last me for some time!"

Helen's Flurried Preparations for a Luxurious Trip on a Private Car

Her suède pumps and Warren's brushes must still go in! And already the suitcase was bulging.

His leather collar box took up so much room! Finally fitting in the collars without the box, Helen made space for the slippers and brushes.

A four-day trip to Detroit, with only her overnight bag, which held so little, and one suitcase! She wanted to take another, but Warren, who loathed bothering with luggage, insisted one was enough.

A hurried business trip—he had said she could go if she did not make a "lot of fuss" and take a "lot of traps."

They were leaving on the four-thirty. She hoped Warren would come in time to change his suit. She had laid out his gray tweed.

A bang of the hall door!

Dropping a suit hanger, Helen ran out to greet him.

"Oh, I'm glad you've come early! You'll have time to change."

"Got to call up the office first. Forgot to tell Miss Lone about those Clements papers. Here, put these in," handing her a familiar flat package.

Only one suitcase, yet he must take the inevitable box of cigars.

She managed to force it in by taking out one of the military brushes and fitting her bedroom slippers inside of his.

She was laying out his fresh underwear when he came in from the 'phone.

"Dear, did you get a section?"

"Nope," he peeled off his coat.

"Oh, you had to take upper berths?" rejecting an undershirt minus a button.

"Guess again," ripping off his collar.

"Warren, you didn't get a stateroom? Oh, that's so extravagant! I'd much rather have the money for something else."

"Now you needn't throw a fit! I didn't get a stateroom."

"You mean everything's taken? We'll have to sit up all night?" dismayed.

"Not much, we won't!" he grinned.

"Oh, dear, don't tease me. How ARE we going?"

"On a private car."

"A private car?" dropping the cuff-button she was putting in his shirt.

"Yes, Kane decided he'd better go along."

"A private car!" awed at this supreme luxury. "Has he a private car?"

"He's a director of the B. & W. road—taking the president's car. Wants to see that property himself before he buys it."

"When did you know this?" tensely.

"His secretary 'phoned this morning," carelessly, scooping out the money and keys from his trouser pockets.

"And you didn't call me up? You knew we were going on this private car—and you didn't tell me!"

"I'm telling you now! What're you beefing about?"

"You'd let me go without any clothes? With only one suitcase for us both on a private car!"

"What the Sam Hill's that got to do with it? What'd you want to take—a lot of ball gowns?"

Ignoring this derision, Helen climbed up on the chair which she had dragged to the closet.

"What are you trying to do now?"

"I'm going to take that other suitcase!" vehemently. "I'm NOT going in a private car without any clothes!"

"Hold on, there, I'll get it! Don't you know better than to stand on the back of a chair? That's a fine way to break your neck!"

Hauling down the suitcase, he flung it on the bed.

"There you are! Now take all the fool frills you can cram in!"

"You might've let me know this morning," resentfully, as she dusted the bag. "You never want me to take anything! If we went around the world, you wouldn't want more than one suitcase!"

"You bet I wouldn't! All I need's a collar and a toothbrush!" as he slammed into the bathroom.

With flurried haste and indecision Helen laid out the clothes she thought necessary for the exclusive luxury of a private car. If she had only known this morning. She had less than an hour now. The navy suit that had seemed quite good enough for a dusty sleeper was promptly changed for her light gray with the plaited skirt. A dinner gown and an evening gown and wrap were hurriedly added.

As to just what should be worn on a private car Helen was vaguely uncertain. To be safe she would take as many things as possible.

"Who else is going?" anxiously, as Warren emerged from the bathroom.

"Mrs. Kane, Dr. Rosenbach, another director, and Kane's secretary. We'll have a ripping trip!"

"Mrs. Kane? What's she like? Is she very dressy?"

"Never noticed," with maddening indifference. "Got those cigars in?"

"Yes, in the other case. Dear, I've put in your dinner coat. You ought to have your brown suit, too. If we could take that old grip I could get it in."

"For the love of Lulu! Want to take all the luggage in the place just for a four-day trip?"

"But on a private car—you don't know what we'll need."

"Well, I won't need another suit. Can't wear but one at a time—even on a private car!" derisively. "Got in my shaving things? Last time you took

along a lot of traps you didn't need—and left out my shaving brush."

"It's in now. Look, dear, she knows we're going," as Pussy Purr-Mew sniffed at their bags. "I must tell Nora not to feed her too much. That time we went to Boston she made her sick. Just stuffed her!"

"Now you'd better hustle. Only got twenty minutes." Warren was dressing with his usual not-a-wasted-movement celerity.

Had she everything in? Stockings and slippers for the gowns she was taking? Gloves—and her best handkerchiefs? Oh, she must take her long Paris veil! Too good for ordinary travel—but ideal for a private car.

And her toilet things? A hasty scrutiny of her fitted overnight bag. Tooth paste, powder, cold cream, hairpins and curlers. She wished she could take her electric curling iron—but there was no room.

"Almost ready? I'm going to order the taxi," warned Warren.

While he was at the telephone Helen flew out to give Nora final instructions.

"Now take good care of everything. We'll be back Friday night. Don't feed Pussy Purr-Mew too much—no raw meat! Draw all the shades—the sun fades the rugs. Be careful about that range—but you won't use the oven. Bolt the front door as we go out. Leave a note for the milkman, and be sure to——"

"These bags ready to strap?" shouted Warren.

"Right away, dear, I'm coming! Yes, they're both ready," darting back to the bedroom. "Be careful, that buckle's loose—I must have that fixed."

"Sure you got everything in? I'll not open 'em again," grimly.

"Yes, everything. Oh, hair nets! I knew there was something! No, not in there—they go in my small case."

"That confounded telephone!"

"I'll answer it—you strap those," as she flew into the library.

"Oh, hello, Carrie! . . . Friday night. We're just starting now. We're going in a PRIVATE car! . . . Mr. Kane—he's one of the directors of the B. & W. road. . . . Why I thought you knew Warren was his attorney. Oh, it's going to be a luxurious trip —just five in a wonderful private car!"

"Stop blowing!" shouted Warren. "Come, take out some of this stuff. I can't close this blooming case!"

So seldom had Helen a chance to impress her supercilious sister-in-law, that she had not been able to resist this rare opportunity.

But now, flushed and disconcerted that Warren had heard her, she came back to re-arrange the things in the overcrowded suitcase.

"What'd Carrie want?" he stood truculently over her.

"She wanted to know if we'd be back by Sun-

day," recklessly creasing her gowns. "I suppose they're coming in—and we'll be so tired. They were just here Sunday before last," resentfully. "Dear, it's too much!"

"Now don't stop to fuss about that! You got just five minutes!"

Then followed the usual hectic last-minute rush. With final anxious emphasis, she again cautioned Nora to "take care of everything."

They were out at the elevator when she dashed back to make sure she had locked the hall closet—the depository for their few bottles of wine and other valuables.

"Now what've you forgotten?" was Warren's ironic demand when they were finally whirled off in the taxi. "Your lip stick or powder puff? Great tragedy!"

This stock remark whenever they started off no longer annoyed her.

"I don't think I've forgotten a thing!" adjusting her veil by the reflector.

Restoring an elusive hairpin, her rings caught on her net. This trivial incident evoked a panicky gasp of dismay.

"Eh, what is it? Knew you left something!" lighting a cigar with an exasperating chuckle.

"Those hair nets! That telephone rang just as I started to put them in! But any drug store has them," excitedly peering out the window. "Oh, that's one over there! Tell him to stop!"

"No you don't!" jerking back her hand as she

rapped on the glass. "Go ahead! Step on it!" with a peremptory wave to the driver.

"It won't take a minute! And this one's torn. I MUST get some!"

"Nothing doing," inexorably. "If you hadn't spent so much time blowing to Carrie about that private car—you'd have got 'em in."

"But, Warren, I can't keep my hair up without them!" frantically.

"You can't, eh? Then wear it down your back! I'll not take a chance on missing that train for your fool hair nets. This is a business trip. You're not going to be presented at court. Nobody cares a hoot how you look, anyway!"

Helen's Dubious Enjoyment of the Exclusive Luxury of a Private Car

"Pullman, sah? What's yo' numba?" flung back their bag-laden porter as he led them through the crowded station.

"Car 999," crisped Warren.

"999?" an incredulous smirk on his ebony face.

"It's a private car," broke in Helen. "Mr. Kane's private car!"

Instantly the swaggering Ethiopian became abjectly servile. Every brass button now exuding deference, he ushered them out through the gates.

"Where's Mr. Kane's private car?" he demanded of a platform official.

"Track 6," the official touched his cap to Warren.

The end car on Track 6 was a long, sleek, dark green coach, without the usual magniloquent Pullman name—only the magic figures "999."

Even the buff linen shades that kept out prying glances imparted an air of aloof exclusiveness.

An astute West India porter stood by the car awaiting Mr. Kane's guests.

"Mr. Kane not here?" asked Warren as they entered the observation lounge.

"Not yet, sir. His man just brought down his

bags." Then, imperiously to the station porter, who still had their suitcases, "Right on back!"

"Well, this's something like!" Warren dropped into a deep leather chair. "Pretty smooth, eh?" glancing around the luxurious car.

"I wish we hadn't come so early," anxioused Helen. "I hate to be the first here."

"Early? The rest of the bunch are late. Pull out in ten minutes," glancing at the clock impaneled over the door. "Here they come now."

Mr. Kane, tall, iron gray, august, greeted them cordially, introducing Dr. Rosenbach and Mr. Winslow to Helen.

"No, I'm sorry, Mrs. Kane's not coming. Her sister's quite ill."

Helen repressed a gasp of dismay. To be the only woman on this four-day trip with four men!

"Good afternoon, Mr. Kane," an official entered. "Your party all here?"

"Yes, we're all here. Briggs, all the bags aboard?"

"Yes, sir, in the staterooms. Here's a couple of telegrams."

With a careless glance at the yellow envelopes, Mr. Kane thrust them unopened into his pocket.

As the train drew out Helen, feeling awkward and insignificant, snuggled into the far corner of the leather couch, behind a shielding armchair.

If she could slip unnoticed into their stateroom! Where was it? Unfamiliar with the anatomy of a private car, she feared to betray her ignorance.

Perhaps she was less conspicuous where she was. Trying to seem absorbed in the straggling suburbs, she gazed out of the window beside her.

"Mrs. Curtis, there are some books here that may amuse you," suggested Mr. Kane. "Briggs, bring in that package."

The package opened disclosed eight new detective and mystery novels.

But Helen made only a pretense at reading. She was much more interested in the appointments of a private car.

In this observation end were six leather armchairs, a couch and two convertible desk-card tables.

A telephone, an electric fan, shaded reading lamps, a wall speedometer, a barometer and thermometer were part of the elaborate wall fittings. The eight broad windows were equipped with shades, screens and wire glass.

The attentive Briggs now appeared with cigars and mineral water.

"Will you have still or charged water?" solicitously, to Helen.

"Still, please. No, thank you," refusing the proffered cigarettes.

"Last year we carried only 48 per cent. of our freight cars loaded. It's hauling the empties that eats into the net profit."

From the conversation that followed Helen learned much about freight traffic.

Every road had the right to use the box or flat

cars of every other road for the universal rate of a dollar a day each. They could be taken from any freight yard or side track throughout the country and left wherever unloaded.

A long freight train lumbering by, made up of cars from many roads, was evidence of this interchangeable system.

Taking advantage of their absorption in railroad economics, Helen finally slipped out to locate their suitcases.

The doors of the three staterooms open, she found their bags in the third.

It was much like the drawing-room section of any Pullman car, with the added luxury of a five-drawer dressing table and a wardrobe.

Over the door hummed an electric fan. By the couch berth was a telephone and the same system of call buttons as in the observation lounge.

What time would they dine? It was now after six. Should she dress? Was that the custom of a private car, as on an ocean liner?

Her things unpacked and distributed in the towel-lined drawers, she decided to slip on her mauve crêpe, which was semi-evening.

"Yes, dear, just a second," unbolting the door to Warren's impatient rattling. "Oh, I'm glad you've come in! Are you going to dress?"

"Dress? You don't dress on a train!" turning on the water in the gleaming basin.

"I thought you might on a private car. Does this look too much?"

"Oh, you're all right," soaping his hands without a glance toward her. "Hello, lamp that wardrobe! Pretty nifty layout. This is the way to travel."

"It's wonderful, but I—I feel so out of place with just you four men."

"That's all right. You can play around. Where're my collars?"

Whatever his surroundings, Warren was never impressed nor disconcerted. He could have dined with all the potentates of Europe with perfect nonchalance. His imperturbable ease Helen always envied, for so often, as now, she felt painfully self-conscious and awkward.

The buzz of their telephone, and the porter's voice, "Dinner's served."

"Wait, dear, wait for me," as Warren, with a careless brush of his hair, started out. "And we don't want to be the first at the table."

"Why not? I'm ready for food. Bet they've a darn good chef on this car."

"Oh, aren't we served from the regular diner?" powdering her arms.

"Not much! Kane carries his own cook and porter. Ready?"

The dining room radiated opulence with its polished woodwork, mirrors, fitted china closet, silver-laden sideboard and table.

"Mrs. Curtis, will you sit here?" Mr. Kane, taking the armchair at the end, placed Helen at his right.

Mr. Winslow sat beside her. Warren opposite, and Dr. Rosenbach next to him.

"How many can you take on this car?" asked Warren.

"Six, comfortably—there're only three state-rooms. But we can take eight if we make up this couch here and the one in the observation."

"Do you ever rent this car?" inquired the doctor.

"Not this one, but there're some you can rent."

"How much?" Warren reached for an olive.

"Twenty-five regular fares besides the rent of the car—I forget what that is. Harmon, after he made that clean-up in copper took a party of eight down to Florida—cost him about five thousand for two weeks."

Wall Street, bond issues, reorganizations—their careless intimate discussion of big deals increased Helen's sense of insignificance.

The dinner, perfectly served by the exemplary Briggs, was simple but substantial. There were no frills, essentially a man's dinner: cantaloupe, roast beef, asparagus, boiled onions, soufflé potatoes, salad and an ice.

After the coffee, served in the observation lounge, Helen slipped out of the screen door and stood on the platform.

A velvety, moonlit night, the air redolent with the dew-drenched fields.

"Would you like a chair?" Mr. Kane came to the door. "Briggs will get you one."

It was enchanting out there, watching the track that seemed an endless ladder slipping back from under them.

The glint of moon-streaked water as they thundered over a bridge, the firefly motors on distant roads, the winking lights from farmhouse windows, the small villages through which they shot with the arrogant speed of a "limited".

But even the witchery of it all failed to lure Helen from a deepening depression. The world-of-affairs prominence of these men increased her sense of insignificance. Achievement, success, power, were heights unattainable to her.

A feverish ambition consumed her; a passionate protest against the narrow limitations of humdrum domesticity.

"Hello, Kitten!" The screen door brushed against her as Warren swung out. "Jove, it's a bully night! Look at that moon! Speeding up along here; over sixty miles an hour. Great trip, what? Glad you came?"

"Perhaps I shouldn't have come. Dear, I feel so—so in the way."

"Now don't get any of your fool notions. You've made a hit with Kane."

"How do you know?" eagerly. "What makes you think so?"

"Didn't you hear what he just said?" complacently puffing his cigar, a glow in the darkness. "Wants to take us up to Canada next summer; a ten-day trip."

"But I was so stupid at dinner! I couldn't think of a thing to say."

"So much the better. He's fed up with garrulous females. They took some woman novelist out to the coast, and she bored 'em stiff. Tried to scintillate every minute—kept tooting her own horn. You're all right, Kitten; he likes 'em quiet."

Rumpling her hair with a careless caress, he swung back through the screen door.

So in a private car guest a modest effacement was preferable to an assertive brilliancy! After the loquacious, self-laudatory woman novelist, a mouse-like retirement was an asset.

With a faintly ironic smile, Helen gazed back at the ink-shadowed fields. After all, there were compensations. Her retiring diffidence, which she had vainly striven to overcome, had made her a desirable guest.

For the rest of the trip it would be a relief to know that, from her, no conversational scintillations were expected or desired. If not a flattering, it was at least a restful rôle!

A Box of Flowers Exposes an Embarrassing Subterfuge of Feminine Economy

"And Nora's out!" dismayed Helen. "Dear, won't you go?"

Throwing down his paper, grumblingly Warren rose to answer the bell.

"That stupid boy! I told him to announce everyone," darting to her room.

Standing back of the door, she listened, ready to slip into another gown.

"You needn't doll up," called Warren a moment later. "Just some flowers."

"Flowers?" Now in the hall, Helen took the long florist box. "For me?"

"Guess nobody's 'saying it with flowers' to me!" shrugged Warren, turning back to the library.

"I wonder who they're from?" following him in with the box.

"Might open it and find out," ironically, taking up his paper.

But with feminine perverseness, Helen prolonged the delicious uncertainty. There was no address on the long, white box lid, only the gilt-lettered, "A. Warendorff—Florist."

The string and tag must have slipped off. Yet without an address how could it have been delivered?

The lid raised at last disclosed a card beneath

the waxed paper that veiled the long-stemmed roses.

From Mrs. Armstrong! On her card was the penciled message:

For Mrs. Curtis
In appreciation of
her many kindnesses.

"Dear, look—from Mrs. Armstrong! How nice of her. My 'many kindnesses'. I suppose she means my vacuum cleaner. Look, aren't they lovely?"

"Um-m," without glancing up.

"Why these must've cost five or six dollars! She can't be so close as they say. Wasn't it dear of her?"

Out in the pantry Helen took down the tall, over-ornate cut-glass vase that she kept out of sight unless needed for flowers. A Christmas present from Warren's Aunt Amelia. The gaudy cut design suggested a trading-stamp premium.

As Helen filled the vase and sprinkled a little salt in the water her thoughts revolved about Mrs. Armstrong.

Repeated borrowing of the vacuum, instead of buying one, and the unflattering stories circulated by Mrs. Armstrong's maid, had confirmed her reputation for painful economy. Yet, surely, no one with parsimonious tendencies would order a dozen American Beauties!

Lifting them out under the strong glare of the

sixty-watt pantry light, Helen noticed that the outer petals of the heavy crimson buds were slightly wilted. And there were not a dozen—only eleven!

Had one been extracted from the untied box? But who would purloin a flower?

"No, I can't play with you now," as Pussy Purr-Mew, who had been nibbling at a bit of fern, crept into the box and blinked up expectantly.

To curl up in an empty box and be carried in to Warren, box and all, to be admired and have her ears tweaked was always a favorite game.

But now, impatient at being ignored, mischievously she clawed the tissue paper.

"Stop it! You mustn't tear that nice paper!" scolded Helen, intent on arranging the roses.

Cavorting to the end of the long box which extended over the pantry sink, Pussy Purr-Mew was suddenly toppled out on the floor.

"Now, look what you've done!" as she scampered away.

Taking the vase into the library Helen made room for it on the mantel.

"Dear, does that look too heavy there?" standing back to view the effect. "Would it look better on the table?"

Warren's grunt was unenlightening.

Deciding that the ornate, modern cut-glass vase clashed with the antique candlesticks and luster pitcher, Helen finally placed it on the table.

Returning to the pantry, she picked up the box that Pussy Purr-Mew had tipped over on the floor.

Gathering up the scattered paper, she found a small card envelope. It was empty and not addressed—but plainly it had been sealed and broken open.

With an undefined impulse, Helen picked up Mrs. Armstrong's card. It was too large! It had never been in that envelope!

In the next few seconds Helen made swift and illuminating deductions.

The untied box, minus an address tag. The slightly faded roses—eleven instead of twelve. The envelope which had plainly held another card. And, above all, Mrs. Armstrong's petty economies.

"Oh, that's lovely! We might've known!" gleefully catching up Pussy Purr-Mew.

Her cheek against the soft fur, and her gaze fixed on the misfit card, Helen's mind was working fast.

"That's a clever idea. Why can't we pass it along?"

A purring approval from Pussy Purr-Mew.

Darting back to the library Helen took up the vase. Warren, conveniently absorbed in his paper, would never notice the depleted flowers.

Again out in the pantry, she relined the box with the tissue paper, smoothing out the evidence of Pussy Purr-Mew's rumpling paws.

Selecting six roses, the more plausible number, she wiped off the stems and carefully replaced them in the box.

Then addressing one of her own cards to "Mrs.

Alfred Benton—With best wishes for your quick recovery" she tucked it among the flowers.

The box neatly tied with a bit of pink string from the pantry "string drawer," Helen viewed it approvingly and carried it out to the elevator.

"Take this to Mrs. Benton on the eleventh floor," when the car came up in response to her ring.

"Yes'm," the elevator boy eyed the box with interest.

Back in the library Helen took up her interrupted magazine serial.

But the story now failed to hold her. She was picturing the flattered reception of her flowers. As Mrs. Benton was convalescing from a slight operation, it was a most timely offering—and incidentally would pay for those mangoes the Bentons brought them from Cuba.

If Mrs. Armstrong could discharge obligations with second-hand flowers why could not she?

Who had sent the flowers to Mrs. Armstrong? Why had she not been more discreet in her strategy? How careless to have overlooked that envelope—and how foolish to keep one of the roses! Better to have kept six. Roses are ordered by the dozen or half dozen—never eleven. Nor does a florist ever send out a box untagged and untied.

But the flowers were finally forgotten in the lurid serial of flapper sensationalism.

It was after nine when the door bell rang again.

"Oh, surely no one this late!" tumbling Pussy

Purr-Mew from her lap. "Dear, do you mind going?"

Again Warren grumblingly threw down his paper and stumped out to the door. He came back with a note which he tossed at Helen.

"What's the idea? Why all the notes and flowers? Ringing in another birthday?"

With pleased expectancy Helen tore open the envelope. From Mrs. Benton—probably thanking her for the flowers.

> "My dear Mrs. Curtis:
>
> It was sweet of you to send me the flowers. Yes, I am much better. Quite well enough to enjoy a very amusing joke.
>
> You see, less than an hour ago I sent those roses (a dozen of them) to Mrs. Armstrong! So I was somewhat surprised when I opened the box. But as, fortunately, I have a sense of humor, it made really quite a diversion in an otherwise tiresome day.
>
> Yours,
> Lucille G. Benton."

As a horrified exclamation escaped her, Warren glanced up.

"Who's that from?" her crimson mortification flagging his attention.

"Just a note from Mrs. Benton," she tried to say it carelessly.

"What about? You're red as a beet. See here, you're not having any rumpus with anybody in the house?"

With masculine dread of feminine squabbles, Warren always admonished her against intimacies with too close neighbors. "Make your friends outside," was his sage motto. "Then when you have a row you're not always bumping into 'em!"

And now, his suspicions aroused by her confused silence, he threw down his paper with a stern, "Let's see that note!"

"Why, dear, it's nothing—just about something I sent her."

"Let me see it!"

Knowing the inexorability of that tone, reluctantly she handed it to him.

A scowling glance at the condemning note. But instead of the dreaded explosion Warren threw back his head and roared.

"Ha, ha, that's the time you got stung! You're always passing on your presents—and here's where you got what's coming to you. That's a darned clever letter. She handed you a knockout all right."

"It's a hateful letter," flamingly, trying to take it from him.

But, holding her off, he tauntingly read it aloud.

"That's the richest yet. You women passing around those flowers—paying off your debts on the cheap. Well, you were dumb. You knew Mrs.

Armstrong was a tightwad—might've doped it out she didn't order those flowers for you."

"I did," admitted Helen, almost tearfully. "I knew someone sent them to her—that's what gave me the idea. But I didn't dream it was Mrs. Benton."

"Huh, a rum mix-up! Hereafter when you pass on your presents—be careful you don't hand 'em back where they came from. Mrs. Benton's a good sport. Glad she had the nerve to show you up. You'll feel pretty small when you meet her in the elevator."

Then, with a chuckle, as he again settled down with his paper:

"But for all we know she may be in the same boat with the rest of you cheap skates—might've passed 'em on herself. Ha, ha, those flowers were hustled along pretty lively before they wilted. Had quite a jaunt around. Bet they broke all speed limits since they left the florist."

Warren's Scintillating After-Dinner Speech Does not Come off as Scheduled

"Dear, do you want me to cough when your ten minutes are up?" Helen was drawing on her sixteen-button white gloves as they taxied down the Avenue.

"Don't worry, I'll cut it short, all right," Warren glowered out at the glistening tops and firefly lights of the swarming motors.

"You've got your notes?" anxiously.

"Didn't make any."

"Oh, Warren, I begged you to! There'll be a lot of prominent people. Let me see that letter again. Who else is to speak?"

"Didn't say," fumbling in his dinner-coat pocket.

Switching on the light overhead, Helen scanned the letter he tossed her.

"My dear Curtis:

At the dinner the Civic Club is giving Alvin Gregory, we want you to make one of the ten-minute talks.

You have known Gregory for a number of years, and the Committee feel you can give us something a little more intimate than the cut-and-dried after-dinner spiel.

Yours,

G. R. Wagner."

"I wonder who else they'll have?" returning the letter. "Dear, don't begin with that old threadbare, 'I'm glad to be here this evening', or 'It gives me great pleasure to'——"

"Where's he going?" Warren pounded on the glass. "Turn off here."

"One-way street, sir," the driver called back. "We got to go 'round."

"And don't try to be funny! I hate that straining after a laugh. And don't tell that story about the Scotch juryman. You always drag that in."

"Guess I can make a ten-minute talk without any coaching from you."

"Dear, you're good at most things—but not at talking in public."

"I'm not, eh!" bristling. "S'pose you'd prescribe Professor Bunko's mail-order course 'How to Bryanize in Six Lessons'?"

More Instructions From Helen

"And, dear, don't play with the silver! I'd rather you put your hands in your pockets. It's not just the thing, but you look more at ease."

"Anything else wrong with this picture?" grunted Warren.

"Yes. I didn't like the way you stood when you talked at that Association. You sort of bowed your legs and teetered back and forth."

"Think they'll all crawl under the table to lamp my legs?"

"Just stand squarely and forcefully as you always do. It's only when you get up to talk—you sort of see-saw. And, dear, DON'T eat much! I read the other day that no one can speak well after a hearty dinner."

"Pity they didn't call on you," as they drew up before the hotel entrance.

The Gregory dinner was in one of the banquet rooms on the top floor.

Though the cards had said "7:30," by the time they had checked their wraps it was almost eight, and the guests were just being seated.

"There're the Merwins," fluttered Helen. "Oh, good evening. Yes, we'd love to sit at your table, but Mr. Curtis is going to speak. I presume we'll be at the speakers' table."

"Been looking for you, Curtis," Mr. Wagner gripped Warren. "We've put you and Mrs. Curtis next to Senator Palaver," leading them to the flower-decked table.

A series of introductions, and Helen found herself proudly seated at the long speakers' table between Warren and the portly, pompous Senator.

Everyone cheered as Alvin Gregory, their retiring president, took the seat of honor.

The Dinner Begins

Mr. Wagner, the chairman, now rapped for order.

"Just a moment. The photographers are ready to take the flashlight."

A general stir of facing the gallery where the camera was being focused.

Helen assumed her most effective pose—a chin-tilted, profiled wistfulness.

"Dear, don't look straight at it. That flash always makes you squint."

"Take more'n a squint to mar my style of beauty," he grinned.

An explosive flash, a cloud of smoke, and again the buzz of voices.

The Senator not troubling to talk to her, Helen was free to appraise the other diners. Twenty tables of the smug, well-dressed Civic Club crowd.

The dinner now in progress, the Cape Cods were followed by green turtle soup. Not the usual weak, tepid fluid of public functions, but a thick broth with the tang of real turtle.

"Hello, you don't often get brook trout at these talk-fests," Warren greeted the fish course. "We're playing in luck tonight."

"I understand we're to get a good dinner," the Senator leaned across Helen. "Wagner saw the chef and slipped him a good fat tip."

Helen Tries to Curb Warren's Appetite

"But, dear, you know you mustn't eat much," whispered Helen.

"Well, I'm not going to pass this up," dispatching the trout *meunière.*

The entrée, braised sweetbreads, and the roast

guinea hen, were equally delicious. Helen's restraining nudges became more insistent.

The endive cheese-dressed salad was followed by tall goblets of *marron glacé.*

"That's so rich! Dear, don't eat much of it. And none of those cakes," all in a guarded undertone. "Now have you got it straight in your mind? You know just what you're going to say?"

"Oh, tune off! Let me finish my dinner in peace."

"Yes, drink all your coffee," when that was served. "It clears the brain."

It was just 9:30 when the chairman introduced the first speaker.

A typical after-dinner talker, his effusive tributes to Mr. Gregory flowed with facile, flowery phrases. Exceeding his allotted ten minutes, he wound up with a rhetorical encomium, and sat down amid dutiful applause.

Tense with expectation, Helen twisted her napkin. Would Warren be next?

A few facetious remarks from the chairman, and the second speaker, Mr. Walter Rodman, was introduced.

His studied, slangy, "good fellow" speech, interlarded with "funny" stories, Helen hardly heard. Warren would be next, she felt sure.

Helen Worries

Surreptitiously she powdered her face, flushed from her nervous anxiety.

"He's talking from notes," she whispered. "Dear, make some on the back of this," turning over the souvenir menu. "Jot down your main points."

Spurred by her intensity, Warren scrawled a few notes, while Mr. Rodman bubbled on with his carefully rehearsed "extemporaneous" humor.

Again the chairman's witticisms before announcing the next speaker.

Again Helen's throbbing expectation was causeless, for Senator Palaver was now introduced.

With "spread-eagle" oratory, his eulogistic garrulity fairly overwhelmed Mr. Gregory.

Words, words! Torrents of bombastic, flag-waving phrases. Laudatory flights of sonorous volubility. A prolixity of words with a paucity of ideas.

His ten minutes long past, he boomed on with no sign of the end. Several times he paused to mop his heated baldness, and once to wet his flaccid lips from the glass that Helen had prudently moved back from his table-pounding fist.

After exhausting his laudations to the guest of honor, he plunged into a general review of American history, pledging his support to the "Constitution—that Unimpeachable Bulwark of Our Liberties." From this eminence he thundered into a dissertation on world conditions.

His audience was growing restive—coughing, shifting chairs and feet. But ignoring these polite intimations, his pleonastic verbosity continued.

PREHISTORIC STORIES

And his laboriously dragged-in jokes! "In this connection, I want to tell a little story about—" Prehistoric stories! Jokes from the Paleozoic Age!

"Dear, how much longer is he going to talk?" whispered Helen.

"Just getting warmed up," shrugged Warren. "Good for another hour."

"But he only had ten minutes."

"That's not worrying him. He could hand out that flap-doodle all night."

The restlessness grew more pronounced. The chairman pointedly laid his watch on the table.

But Senator Palaver, entranced by his resonant vacuities, mouthed on unheedingly.

"And now in conclusion—"

The rustle of relief was premature. He had launched off again.

At last the embarrassed chairman half arose, his watch in his hand.

"Ah, I fear my time is up. But before I leave this gifted gathering, there is one enduring, ennobling thought I want you to carry away—"

Would he NEVER sit down? Dropping her mask of polite interest, Helen looked up at him with stabbing resentment.

"Anybody got a brick in his dinner coat?" muttered Warren.

When the Senator finally took his seat, the chairman's gavel sharply interrupted the applause of relief that followed.

Warren Gets No Chance

"The hour is getting late. We had other speakers scheduled, whom we hoped to hear from, but I regret we must forego that pleasure."

The dinner abruptly breaking up, Warren steered Helen through the congratulatory group that gathered around the guest of honor.

"Let's beat it. Better get our wraps before this mob gets started."

"Why didn't they stop him?" flamed Helen, when they reached the hall. "Why did they let him talk on like that? Why didn't the chairman—"

"Huh, you couldn't shut off the current on old Palaver," fishing the cloakroom checks from his vest pocket. "Going strong at the end. Fat chance of switching off his line of patriotic bunk. And his moldy jokes—whiskered when they told 'em in the smoking-room on the Ark."

"Then he should've been last. Mr. Wagner should've called on you first."

"Darned glad he didn't! I was well out of that chin-marathon. What makes me sore is the grub I missed," shrugging into his coat. "Every time I took a running start at that guinea hen—you poked me in the ribs."

"And I told Mrs. Merwin you were to talk," getting into her wrap unaided. "I don't know what she'll think. Her husband's on the *Star*, and I thought if he wrote up the dinner he'd mention the speakers and maybe—"

"Now, you needn't do any broadcasting for me! When I want a press agent, I'll hire one. And no more putting the brakes on my appetite! Made me pass up that guinea hen for a talk I didn't make!" with a snort. "Next time, speech or no speech, you watch me nail my dinner!"

PART II

INTRUDING IN-LAWS

Helen Rebels at the Annual Visitations of Warren's Cantankerous Aunt

"We've only a few minutes," Carrie dropped into the easy chair by the window. "I just came in to exchange Bobbie's shoes."

"Then you can't stay for dinner?" Helen achieved the proper note of regret.

"No, we're going back on the 6:30. Don't Precious, you'll break it! Come here to Mother!"

"Come away from the mantel," urged Helen, as the incorrigible Bobbie continued to bounce his balloon. "You might knock something over."

"I've a letter from Aunt Amelia," drawing off her gloves Carrie opened her handbag. "She wants to come week after next to have her glasses changed."

Aunt Amelia! Helen's heart sank. Surely she would not be expected to have Warren's fretful, contentious aunt again this year?

"You know we're having the new furnace put in —be careful, Pettie! She wouldn't be comfortable with everything upset. She'd better stay with you."

"Why, Carrie, we've had her every time for the last three years! You haven't had her once."

"But how can I? It'll take a month to put in that furnace."

"They're not putting it in the guest room," persisted Helen, goaded by her sister-in-law's selfish disregard of all family obligations. "Last year

you couldn't have Aunt Amelia because you had the painters. The year before, Bobbie was sick. Now it's the furnace——"

"Can I help that?" tartly. "There's always something when you live in the suburbs. If I'd a city apartment with nothing to do, I wouldn't make such a fuss about having Aunt Amelia for a few days."

"A few days? It's always over a week!"

"That was her teeth—now it's only her glasses. Here's what she says."

With smouldering resentment Helen read the letter.

"Dear Carrie,

If convenient I would like to come in a week from Monday to have my glasses changed. I have been troubled with headaches a great deal lately and we think it is these glasses.

I should have attended to this sooner but wanted to wait until after Lucy's wedding, next Tuesday. Not a big wedding—just the family. Married in her traveling suit—going to Cuba. I should think she would rather have that money for the house, but they are both set on the trip. I am giving her a dozen tablespoons, same design as the knives and forks from her mother.

With love to you and Lawrence,

Aunt Amelia."

"Can't she get her glasses changed in Springfield?" Helen handed back the letter. "They've opticians there. Why must she come to New York?"

"Well, you know Aunt Amelia. She thinks she can't get anything in Springfield—even sends here for her hair nets. Now look what you've done!" as the balloon floated up to the ceiling and caught on the chandelier. "No, Mother can't get it down. You'll have to wait for Uncle Warren."

"Aunt Helen, can't you?" whimpered the intractable Bobbie.

"No, I couldn't reach that string," glad the balloon was safely out of the way. "Here," giving him a magazine, "look at the nice pictures in this."

"Uncle Warren won't be long," comforted his mother. "There he is now!"

"I want my balloon!" Bobbie bounded out to the hall. "Uncle Warren, come get my balloon!"

"Hello, Carrie," Warren breezed in. "How's everything? Lawrence here?"

"No, we're going out on the 6:30. I just wanted to see you about Aunt Amelia."

"Aunt Amelia? Hello, Skeezicks!" tweeking Bobbie's ear.

"She wants to come a week from Monday to have her glasses changed. I'd be glad to have her—but we're all upset with the furnace. Here's her letter."

"What does she say?" swinging Bobbie to his shoulder.

Above the gleeful shouts, Carrie read aloud the letter.

"That Bowman boy she's marrying—any good?" Warren landed his squirming nephew on his feet.

"Just a clerk in his father's drug store—that one next to the bank. Well, I'll write Aunt Amelia you'll expect her a week from Monday."

"Dear, we've had Aunt Amelia for the last three years!" broke in Helen. "And you know she's never comfortable here—she says that bedroom's so noisy."

"She'd be much less comfortable with us," Carrie combated. "They're putting in two new radiators—the whole place'll be upset."

"Oh, all right, guess we can have her," shrugged Warren. "Haven't anything on for that week, have we?"

"I want my balloon! Uncle Warren, you get my balloon!"

"Oh, don't stand on that chair!" anxioused Helen. "Get one from the bedroom."

"I can reach it without a chair. Bobbie, run get my cane!"

"Then I'll write Aunt Amelia tonight?" pursued Carrie. "Oh, you'll break it!" as Warren tried to hook down the elusive balloon.

"I'll get a chair," Helen darted into the bedroom.

Alone, she stood before the dressing table, her hands pressed against her hot cheeks. It was so unfair! His whole family always made a conven-

ience of her! It was a flagrant imposition for Carrie not to take Aunt Amelia this year.

"Warren!" she called from the door, "I can't close this window."

"Which window?" Warren strode in.

"No, no, I just wanted to speak to you. Dear, it ISN'T fair! We've had Aunt Amelia three years in succession—and you know how difficult she is. She's written Carrie—she doesn't expect to come here!"

"Well, if they're having the furnace put in——"

"She always has some excuse! She just doesn't intend to have her! She puts all the family on me. Dear, WON'T you tell her it's her turn?"

"Now, why make a fuss for a few days? Guess we can stand it."

"You can—you see her only at dinner. You don't have to cater to her and listen to her complaints. And she expects to be taken to a matinee or concert every day—says she gets to New York but once a year. And she must sit way up front! Last time I spent over forty dollars just on tickets and taxis."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, don't raise a rumpus over a few dollars!"

"Well, that's why Carrie won't have her! I never object to entertaining your family. When they're in town they all stay here over-night—but with Aunt Amelia it's a week or more. And Carrie NEVER has her! Dear, won't you say——"

"I want my balloon!" Bobbie was pounding on the door.

"Say something strong! Make her understand she MUST have her this year!"

With a noncommittal grunt, Warren carried the chair into the library.

"There you are," drawing down the balloon to Bobbie's eager hands. "Now hold on to it!"

"Is that clock right? Twenty minutes to six? Get your cap, Precious!"

"Carrie, since Aunt Amelia's written you," began Warren, in reluctant response to Helen's imploring signals, "maybe she'd rather be out in the suburbs. She's been here so much—might like a change. Why not write her to wait until you get the furnace in?"

"Oh, Helen's been coaching you! I knew that's what she called you out for! After the furnace we'll have the carpenters for that sleeping porch. And you know Aunt Amelia won't be put off. But if Helen's so worried about the expense, I'm perfectly willing to pay you for her board!"

"Eh? What's that?" thundered Warren. "You crazy?"

"Not at all. I know that's what's worrying Helen—so I'll pay for her board, and entertainment, too!"

"Are you just trying to be insulting?" flushed Helen.

"Why, no, I'm only trying to do my part," with her most exasperating shrug. "I'm quite willing to pay——"

"Now that's about enough, Carrie," snorted War-

ren. "That's a little too raw! We'll have Aunt Amelia. Now drop it!"

"You needn't be so touchy! I just wanted to do my share. I'd another glove somewhere—oh, here it is! Then I'll write Aunt Amelia you'll expect her the eighteenth. Come on, Pettie, leave that cat alone! Where's your cap?"

Helen bit her lip to keep back her surging resentment. Her selfish, assertive sister-in-law had scored again.

"Where DID you put your cap? Now, isn't that TOO provoking? We've barely time to make that train! Warren, you'd better ring for the elevator. It's here somewhere."

A cyclonic search finally produced the cap from under the couch, where Bobbie had hurled it at Pussy Purr-Mew.

"I'm coming in Friday—I'll call you up," flung back Carrie as they rushed out to the hall and into the waiting elevator.

The flaming color scorching her face, Helen closed the door—hard.

"She heard what I said in the bedroom—she listened! That's why she offered to pay. She knows how to work you—she knew you'd flare up at that!"

"Eh, work me? Carrie wouldn't try that—and she wouldn't listen either. That was pretty raw about paying—but she didn't mean it that way."

"Oh, she didn't?" bitterly. "You never see through Carrie. She was determined to get out of

having Aunt Amelia—and she did! Next it'll be her teeth again—and Carrie'll invent some other excuse for not having her."

"She'll have to cook up a darn good one!" grimly. "It's Carrie's turn and she'll come across —I promise you that!"

"You say that now—but she'll get out of it somehow. If she can't think of any other way Bobbie'll have scarlet fever! She made me take your Cousin Anna by saying he had the mumps—I found out afterwards he's never had them!"

"Oh, well, drop it! Stop chewing the rag about Carrie and let's have dinner. How's it coming on? Almost ready?"

"I'll ask her," struggling against the surge of sick rebellion that conflicts with Warren's sister always brought.

"Cheer up, Kitten, a week of Aunt Amelia won't kill us! Maybe Carrie did put it over this time but she'll not do it again—I'll see to that!" Then, with a chuckle, "If Bobbie has scarlet fever—we'll go her one better and have measles or small pox! She'll stand a fat chance of side-stepping Aunt Amelia next year!"

A Turbulent Episode Ends a Hot and Hectic Sunday with His Family

A hot, sticky Sunday in the country. A trying day of heat, dust, and tiresome relatives.

The heavy midday dinner had left them all logy, sleepy, and querulous.

Helen thought longingly of the luxury of a nap in her own cool, darkened room. Instead she must sit out on this sun-baked porch, listening to her sister-in-law's complaints of the Hodges, the neighbors across the road.

"She lets those children run wild! I've forbidden Bobbie to go there—but they're always here. Just yesterday they broke two limbs off that plum tree."

"We wuz makin' a swing," Bobbie was still hopping about on the Pogo stick his Uncle Warren had brought him.

"I've told you never to climb in those trees! They're not big enough to hold you. Take your stick out in the yard, Pettie, it's too noisy on the porch."

But Bobbie, as usual ignoring his mother's admonitions, continued to bounce about until Helen was nervous enough to scream.

"Wouldn't it be cooler inside?" she ventured, fanning with the Sunday supplement.

"You get more air out here. Don't you feel that breeze? You ought to be glad you're not in the city today—must be sizzling."

Helen wanted to say it could be no hotter than this; and there would be no stifling dust, no flies, no mosquitoes.

"Bobbie, take that thing out in the yard!" Warren, coat off and feet comfortably elevated, was on the other end of the porch with Lawrence. "Wouldn't have brought it if I'd known you'd make such an infernal racket."

Unaccustomed to obeying anyone, Bobbie continued his noisy jouncing.

"Bobbie, don't you want to run upstairs and get my powder puff? I must've left it on your mother's dresser."

More than she wanted her powder puff, Helen wanted to get Bobbie away from his Pogo stick and Warren's menacing glare.

"Come back and shut that screen door! You'll let the flies in," called his mother as he darted through, leaving the door ajar.

"He always leaves it open. Why don't you have it on a spring?" suggested Helen, thinking of Carrie's stream of criticisms whenever she visited them.

"Why don't I do a lot of things," snapped Carrie. "If you had this big house to run—everything to look after with only one maid—you wouldn't keep things up half as well as I do. In an apartment you don't know what work is!"

"Ain't up here!" yelled Bobbie from the head of the stairs.

"I'm sure it is—a tiny pink bag. Maybe it's on the bed with my things."

"Look, Lawrence, the Bentleys' new car!" Carrie peered up the dust-clouded road. "That's his mother with them. She has the money—but they don't get along at all. They say she's got an awful temper. Their maid told Jane——"

Carrie was launched on her favorite indoor sport—rehearsing scandalous bits of gossip about her neighbors.

"Oh, there go the Pearsons," as a big roadster shot by. "Every Sunday they go to Cedar Inn for dinner. The money they spend—and he's only on a salary. They say they owe their butcher for six months, and they—— Get away, Sport, you're so hot, and you're full of fleas."

The panting bull terrier, who had sprawled down beside her, turned dejectedly away.

"And they have to send to town for their groceries," she rambled on. "Borgers won't give them any more credit. Yet the way she dresses! She just got a new Wendall suit—I saw the label when she was carrying the coat the other day. It cost two hundred if it cost a cent. But, then, of course," with a shrug, "if they never pay their bills——"

"This it?" Bobbie dashed out, twirling a tiny pink bag.

"Shut the screen door, Precious," mechanically from his mother.

Taking out the puff, Helen dusted it over her heat-flushed face.

"Kerchoo! Kerchoo!"

Sneezing violently, she started up, her hands over her eyes.

"That powder puff! He's put something on it —pepper!"

"Pepper? That's absurd," shrilled Carrie. "Where would he get pepper?"

"It's all in my eyes!" running up to the bathroom, followed by Carrie's excited protests of Bobbie's innocence.

After copious applications of cold water, her eyes still red and smarting, Helen came down to examine the puff she had dropped.

"That IS pepper—red pepper! You can see it!"

"Then that's another trick he learned from those Hodge boys," flared Carrie. "He never would've thought of such a thing himself."

"Still smart?" sympathized Lawrence. "Want to bathe them in milk?"

"I didn't get much in my eyes. If I had it might've been serious."

"You're forever dabbing on powder," grumped Warren, who never resented his nephew's pranks unless he was the victim. "Wouldn't be a bad idea if all fool powder puffs were loaded with cayenne."

"Where's Bobbie?" demanded Lawrence, for the

culprit had disappeared. "Carrie you ought to punish him for this."

"I won't punish him for tricks he learns from those Hodge boys! They put him up to all sorts of things. You've just got to keep them away from here."

Helen forced back a caustic remark about Bobbie's malicious antics before the Hodges ever moved into the neighborhood.

"Supper's ready," called Jane through the screen door.

"Supper?" amazed Warren. "Why, we just got up from dinner!"

"It's after six," Carrie reminded him. "And Jane wants to get off."

The dining-room, in spite of the fan humming on the sideboard, was even hotter and more stifling than the porch.

They were hardly seated when Carrie jumped up, snatched a red board that lay on the window-sill, and struck at a fly buzzing against the screen.

"What's that? Pretty husky fly swatter," Warren stared at the board on which was pasted a flamboyant yellow label.

"Oh, that's one of those 'Indestructo' shingles they sent down for me to test out," explained Lawrence, carving the cold roast veal left from dinner. "I may take a little stock in it. If it's all they claim it's a wonder."

"Doesn't look like such a world-beater," Warren examined the board.

"It's dipped in some patent preparation that makes it weatherproof, waterproof, and outwear three ordinary shingles—Helen, you don't like fat, do you? And fireproof, too."

"Huh, they don't claim much for it." Warren dug into the potato salad. "Better look into it pretty close. You can drop a lot on a scheme like that."

"They've got some good men back of them—going to advertise it big. Trying to get a slogan now. Something like 'Indestructo Shingles, Built for Wear' or 'Our No-Leak-O Sheds Sun and Rain'. They want to advertise a catchy phrase so it'll be called for in building specifications."

"Jane, see if Bobbie's upstairs," instructed Carrie. "Tell him to come down to his supper. Why, here he is!" at a snicker from beneath the table. "Why, Precious, what're you doing under there?"

"Nuthin'," crawling out, he climbed into his chair.

"Bobbie, why did you put pepper on Aunt Helen's powder puff?"

"Now, Lawrence, let him eat his supper. Here, Dearie, Mother'll tie your napkin."

"Want some of that," petulantly, pointing at the potato salad.

"No, darling, not for supper. Eat your bowl of rice and milk—then you can have some nice stewed plums and cake."

The supper progressed with constant fretful de-

mands from Bobbie, conciliatory endearments from his mother, and silence from Helen.

"These are some of our own plums," boasted Carrie. "From that little plum tree those wretched boys broke down."

"They're very nice," murmured Helen, politely, spooning into her saucer.

"There's a breeze! Look at those curtains. No matter how hot it is we always get a breeze toward evening. It'll be lovely and cool on the porch now."

"We won't have much time," demurred Helen. "We want to take that 8:10."

"No, you don't—you'll miss the best part of the day," protested Lawrence. "That 9:30 gets you home in plenty of time. Try one of these," passing Warren the box of cigars from the sideboard. "Some Spencer sent me."

They were rising from the table when Warren, with a sudden lurch, fell heavily against the sideboard, knocking over a pitcher of ice water.

A moment's confused excitement, then a volcanic explosion from Warren.

"That devilish brat!"

"What has he done?" shrilled Carrie. "He wasn't near you!"

"Look at my shoestrings! Tied themselves together, did they? Just wait'll I get hold of him! He won't sit down for a week!"

"Oh, you might've fallen. You might've hurt yourself badly," Helen fluttered over him as he

stooped to unfasten the shoestrings that tied his feet together.

A jeering snicker from Bobbie as he slid out and scampered up the stairs.

"How COULD he have done it?" persisted Carrie. "He hasn't been near you."

"He hasn't, eh?" grimly. "What was he up to under the table? Where's that 'Indestructo'?"

Grabbing the red and yellow shingle Warren shot out of the room and up the stairs.

"Don't touch him!" Carrie ran screaming after him. "Don't you dare——"

But the next moment lusty yells from Bobbie proved that his uncle was administering a salutary thrashing.

Lawrence had rushed up too, but Helen, left alone in the dining-room, was content to wait and listen.

For her pepper-laden powder puff, Bobbie had gone unrebuked; but for the prank played on Warren he was being promptly chastised.

A tumultuous interval, then Warren's heavy step clumped down the stairs.

"Well, he got one good licking if he never gets another," he snorted, throwing down the shingle. "Ha, ha, built for hard wear, eh? I gave it a try-out along those lines, all right. Got in a few stingers with the old 'Indestructo' that'll make Bobbie take his meals à-la-buffet for a while. I'll teach that young imp to get gay with ME!"

Helen's Rummage-Sale Donation Involves Her in an Awkward Predicament

Conscience-stricken, Helen gazed at the orange postcard. An appeal she had wholly forgotten!

ANIMAL LEAGUE RUMMAGE SALE
Do Your Share!
Send Your Old Clothes,
Bric-à-Brac, and Furniture
All Proceeds Go To Our
Free Animal Clinic

Animal charities always had Helen's support. She was a yearly contributor to the Humane Society, the Horses' Aid, and the Animal League.

She had fully intended to get up a bundle for this rummage sale, but had mislaid the announcement. And now it was too late—the sale was today.

Again she consulted the card. "From 10 A. M. to 10 P. M." It was only two-thirty now, and most of the things were sold in the afternoon and evening.

There was still time. She could still give something. And the address, an empty store donated for the sale, was only a few blocks away.

Darting to the kitchen, Helen dragged out the step-ladder chair to explore the upper shelves of

the hall closet—her only repository for odds and ends.

Just last week she had sent a bundle of clothes to Germany—a destitute family met on their last trip. But she still had those two old evening gowns.

These laid out, she looked for something more. On the top shelf bulged a newspaper package. What was in it? It felt hard and lumpy. Tearing a slit in the paper, she glimpsed a bloated gilt cherub.

That awful vase! The Christmas-before-last present from Warren's Aunt Amelia.

If only she dared! Why not? He need never know.

He had been furious when she refused to have it on the mantel. Her compromise of putting it in his room had been followed by its banishment to the hall closet. She could always count on his masculine lack of observation.

That was over a year ago. He would never think of it again. A donation to a worthy cause! To what better use could it be put?

Unwrapped, she viewed its onyx base and supporting infants. Aunt Amelia's presents always ran to garish gilt and corpulent cherubs.

An expensive monstrosity, even at a rummage sale it might bring four or five dollars from someone who vibrated to the ornate.

Half an hour later Helen started out with a bulky package.

Around the corner to the back street of neigh-

borhood shops. Down five blocks and in a dusty window, below a "For Rent" sign, was the orange poster:

RUMMAGE SALE
THE WOMEN'S ANIMAL
LEAGUE

Inside were long board tables cluttered with the discouraging assortment of discards, always donated to rummage sales. The walls were hung with bedraggled evening gowns and suits of archaic vintage.

Two customers hovered over a table of old shoes and evening slippers marked, "Choice, 50c." Another was examining a battered carpet-sweeper.

One of the volunteer saleswomen greeted Helen cordially.

"I mislaid the card," apologetically. "Is it too late to leave these?"

"Not at all. We've hardly begun. Everyone comes late in the afternoon."

"I just sent a bundle to Germany, so I had only these two evening gowns—they're not worth much. But I thought you might get something for this vase."

"Indeed we can! Showy things are easy to sell. We'll put this in the window. Mrs. Willis will mark it—she does most of the valuing."

"What do you do with the things that are not sold?" Helen glanced about.

"At nine o'clock we auction off everything that's left. Second-hand dealers come for that. Last

year we cleared over two hundred dollars, but we had a fur coat that brought forty. We've only sold seventeen-fifty so far, but we always do better in the evening."

All the way home Helen was glowingly elated at having disposed of Aunt Amelia's monstrosity, and at the same time contributed to her favorite charity.

"The plumber's here," was Nora's greeting when she entered. "And I just called the butcher 'bout that knife. He says he's got a dozen there he's sharpened, and he's forgot which is our'n. We got to go pick it out."

"Oh, how annoying! If I'd known when I was out. Must we have it tonight?"

"We got roast beef," ominously. "And you know how riled Mr. Curtis got last night when he had to carve with that kitchen knife."

"Then I'll 'phone him to stop and get it on his way home."

Warren loathed being bothered with errands, and invariably he got the wrong thing, the wrong size or the wrong number. But their carving knife he knew, and after his explosion last night he might be willing to get it.

His stenographer on the wire, the next moment she had Warren.

"Dear, would you mind stopping at the butcher's for that carving knife? . . . He can't, he got it mixed with some other knives he's sharpened . . . I can't leave—the plumber's here fixing the shower . . .

Why, yes, we've got that kitchen knife, the one you blew out about last night . . . Roast beef . . . You will? You're a dear."

For Helen the rest of the afternoon passed quickly. She mended and put away the laundry, and finished the bronze silk shade for the hall.

She was trying it on the lamp, when, a little after six, Warren breezed in.

Under his arm was a bulky bundle, in his hand a long, narrow package.

"Here's your knife, Kitten! Good and sharp—now keep it that way. Tell her not to use it in the kitchen. I never have a decent knife to carve with."

"And what's that?" appraising the larger package he had brought.

"Wait and see," he chuckled, hanging up his hat and stick.

"Oh, that candelabrum I've been wanting?" following him into the library.

"No, better'n that. You can get that yourself. I ran on to this by chance. Dumb luck! Bet if you scoured the town, you wouldn't find one like it."

"Oh, let me guess," in a joyous flutter. "I know I can. Let me feel it."

"Feel away. You'd never guess in a thousand years. Got it dirt cheap, too. Here, scoot! Nothing in this for you."

But Pussy Purr-Mew, always insatiably curious about every incoming package, continued her sniffing appraisal.

"There!" triumphantly ripping off the paper.

"If that isn't a dead ringer for Aunt Amelia's vase, I'll eat it. Now you've got a pair!"

In petrified horror Helen stared at his purchase. The gilt-and-onyx monstrosity that she had just taken to the rummage sale!

"You say I never see anything. Well, I lamped THAT, all right. Rum joint, too. Some sort of a rummage sale. Lot of old junk—only decent thing they had."

"What—what did you pay for it?" she faltered.

"Only eight bucks. Talk about YOUR bargains! That'll hold you for a while."

Eight dollars! Helen wound the string around her finger until it cut.

"Now you got a pair we can have 'em in the library. You said one didn't look well—didn't balance, or something. Now get out Aunt Amelia's! Where'd you put it? Oh, I know, in my room."

At any other time Helen would have seen the humor of his absurd lack of observation. It had been over a year since the vase had been on his chiffonier.

"Not there," he swung back. "Side-tracked it, eh? Where 'bouts?"

Helen's thoughts raced chaotically. What could she say? She dared not admit she had given his Aunt Amelia's vase to the rummage sale.

Pussy Purr-Mew was still sniffing at the obese cherubs. Could she have knocked it off and broken it? No, it was too heavy. That would not be plausible.

A maid might have broken it! Anna, Nora, any of the fleeting domestic potentates. But that was how she had disposed of that awful cut-glass bowl his Cousin Irene had given them. She could not risk that same fabrication again.

"Oh, I—I thought I saw a crack there," excusing her prolonged scrutiny.

"Crack?" belligerently. "Where's it cracked? Not even nicked. Now trot out the other one. Let's see 'em together."

"Dear, I'll look it up tomorrow. I don't remember just where I put it."

"Been on my chiffonier right along. When did you shift it?"

"Oh I—I don't remember just when. I thought it was in your way."

"Know where you put it, don't you? Can't lose a thing big as that. Up in the hall closet—that's where you chuck everything. I'll get the step-ladder."

"Not now! It's all dusty up there—and she'll have dinner in a minute."

"Can't do it afterwards. We're going to that show tonight."

"Yes, I know," eagerly. "We'll have to leave it until tomorrow."

"Well, the first thing in the morning you get it down. And write Aunt Amelia. Tell her how I nailed its twin—she'll be tickled to death."

"Dinner's served," announced Nora. "Mr. Curtis bring that carving knife?"

"Yes, it's right there on the hall table."

"Lucky you 'phoned me to get that knife," exulted Warren, when they sat down to dinner. "I'd never have seen that vase. Just above the butcher's."

The prime roast slicing delectably under the razor-sharp knife, contributed to his amiable absorption; and Helen's brooding silence passed unnoticed.

A pair! The other vase! She had until tomorrow night to concoct some feasible excuse for not producing it.

By tomorrow night he might forget all about it. If something important came up at the office, it was very possible. But she dared not count on that.

At the end of the dinner, spooning at her chocolate pudding, the solution came.

That leak in the hall closet from the apartment above! It had almost ruined Aunt Amelia's vase! By tomorrow night she would have discovered the damage and taken it to be repaired. A week, even two, could be required. By that time both vases would have faded from Warren's convenient about-the-house memory.

"What's struck you? 'Bout as chatty as a clam. Haven't opened your trap."

"Oh, I was thinking of the things I must do tomorrow," arousing herself. "Everything comes on Saturday."

"Well, I'll tell you ONE thing you're to do," grimly. "Get that vase down! You're always

side-tracking Aunt Amelia's presents—parking 'em out of sight. But you won't pull that this time! Now you have 'em both on the library mantel when I get home tomorrow—or there'll be trouble."

Then, scraping with avidity his chocolate-pudding saucer:

"What d'you call this stuff? Nothing but air bubbles. Got any more? Well, tell her to trot it out!"

The Near-Tragedy of a Chicken-Wing Purloined from a Restaurant Dinner

"Dear, have you a piece of paper? An old envelope will do."

"An envelope?" Warren was struggling with the drum-stick of his dollar-and-a-half portion of broiled spring chicken. "What d'you want it for?"

"This wing—I haven't touched it. I'll take it to that poor little cat."

"Be gone by the time we're through. Not going by there anyway."

"Why, it's just a block below here," pleaded Helen. "And it looked so wretched—huddled there in that dark doorway."

"Hold on, don't use that!" as she started to fork the chicken on to the dinner card.

Drawing some letters from his pocket he tossed her an envelope.

"For Heaven's sake, don't act like you're swiping something," scowling at Helen's furtive glance about as she thrust the wing into the envelope.

"They might think I'm taking it for myself," she flushed.

"What if they do? We've paid for it. None of their darn business!"

Helen loved his independence, yet as often as she

took scraps from restaurants to feed some pathetic cat, she could not bring herself to do it openly.

"You haven't another envelope? It's coming through this," for the grease had already stained the thin bond paper. "It'll soil my purse."

Grumblingly he gave her another envelope into which Helen slipped the package, concealing it in her bead-bag as the waiter approached.

"Anything else, sir? Salad? We've some nice endive."

"No, I'd rather have romaine. Make a good cheese dressing—Roquefort."

"Some tomatoes with it, sir?"

"If they're not too ripe. Quartered—not sliced."

"Yes, sir." Warren's expert ordering always impressed the waiters.

"By George, there's Conway!" throwing down his napkin.

Mr. Conway! The big tire manufacturer—one of Warren's clients.

With flurried interest Helen watched the portly, pompous man and the stout, expensively gowned woman whom Warren had risen to greet.

"We live just around the corner," after the introductions. "Why not drop in for a few moments? We've finished, but we'll wait for you."

"Great!" agreed Warren, ignoring Helen's appealing nudge.

With Mrs. Conway in an elaborate evening gown sitting beside her, Helen in her simple tricotine suit felt conspicuously plain.

And when, a little later, they came out into the sultry night, she was still straining for some subject of mutual interest, for Mrs. Conway was disconcertingly affected and artificial.

Turning in at a pretentious apartment hotel, they were shot up to the Conways' suite on the eleventh floor.

"What charming rooms," murmured Helen. "You furnished them yourself?"

"Oh, yes, I couldn't live with hotel furniture—it's always impossible!"

Helen glanced about at the expensive but characterless furnishings. Obviously an interior decorator had had unlimited license and money.

Black lacquered furniture against mulberry walls, mulberry rugs, and mulberry hangings. Helen felt even the books in the built-in bookcases had been selected solely for their morocco bindings —an effective note in the color scheme.

It was all forbiddingly formal and unlivable.

"Morgan Staples did these rooms. A consummate artist!" effused Mrs. Conway. "Such unerring taste! You know he's doing Mrs. Richard Jones' house."

Helen had never heard of Mrs. Richard Jones, but she tried to look as if she had.

"She's gone abroad and left everything to him. He's to have it all ready, even to the china, when she gets back. She'll escape all the fuss and worry. If one can afford it that's an ideal way of furnishing. Don't you think so?"

Helen did not think so, but she managed a polite assent. She could imagine nothing more preposterous than to give a decorator full authority. One's own personality, not that of a paid professional, should dominate one's home.

"Would you care to see the other rooms? Perhaps Mr. Curtis would like to come, too?"

"I'm sure he would," untruthfully, knowing Warren was much happier talking "shop." "Dear, Mrs. Conway's going to show us the other rooms."

"What's that?" glowering at the interruption. "Oh, of course," laying down his cigar with ill-concealed reluctance.

"Morgan Staples spent days studying my personality," effervesced Mrs. Conway, ushering them into her bedroom. "He sent down all kinds of draperies and posed me against the different backgrounds to get just the right effects. He even recommended the fabrics and colors for my housegowns!"

"How very interesting!" Helen fell back on that over-worked comment.

"He said my personality was most intriguing. He had never known anyone whose color vibrations were so complex and elusive. He tried ever so many combinations in here before he decided on mauve and old gold."

"How about Conway?" grinned Warren. "What color does he vibrate to? Ought've papered his room with yellow-backs."

"Oh, I wasn't considered in this layout," laughed Mr. Conway. "But I drew the line when Edith wanted him to do over my offices."

"You see how daringly he handled the mauve—and yet with such exquisite restraint," Mrs. Conway ignored their facetiousness. "To me this is such an inspiring room. I feel I can do creative work in here! It's so responsive!"

"It's very attractive!" Helen groped vainly for a more "highfalutin" remark.

"This is one of the house gowns he chose," indicating a bizarrish green and orange mandarin coat draped across a mauve *chaise-longue.*

They were next shown Mr. Conway's room, austerely grandiose in browns.

The dining-room was Italian Renaissance. The heavy carved refectory table and stiff, high-backed chairs gave a grim, ecclesiastical atmosphere.

Warren's aversion for interior decorators was even stronger than her own. To cover his grunting unresponsiveness, Helen was forced to keep up continuous murmurs of "How charming," "How effective."

Even after their return to the library Mrs. Conway was so enrapt in her effusive account of Morgan Staples' temperament, and "iconoclastic methods" that it was ten o'clock before Helen could break in with a departing move.

"Jove, that was tiresome!" when they reached the restful darkness of the street. "But I got a few good points from Conway before she butted in.

He's all right—sharp as a steel trap. How the devil does he put up with her?"

"She's so affected," tucking her arm through his. "All that talk about that decorator! It's just a pose!"

"Well, she's messed up that place," yawned Warren. "Spent a bale of money and got nothing for it. That living-room's 'bout as cheerful as a funeral parlor. And those dinky dining-room chairs—they'd put a crimp in your anatomy!"

"That's because they had a fashionable decorator," laughed Helen. "Aren't you sorry we didn't have one?"

"How in blazes can people fall for that bunk? Haven't enough gumption to know how they want their own homes! Well, I must hand it to you, Kitten! Wouldn't trade our place for ten like that —and we've not spent half as much."

"Half? Why, not a third! You do see, don't you," triumphantly, "that I HAVE put personality into our apartment? You're always making fun of my antiques—but they do give atmosphere, and I DO know how to arrange things."

"Here don't hand yourself too many bouquets. I said you'd done a darn sight better than she had—that's not saying a heluva lot!"

"Our lovely old things—they're so distinctive! You know everyone who comes is impressed. Think what could've been done with the money she spent."

"Huh, she had to pay something to have that bird gush over her 'intriguing personality!' Jove,

he must've laid it on thick! Wonder if he hands 'em all the same spiel. Eh, what've you lost now?"

"Oh! Oh!" frantically Helen was searching her handbag.

"Well, don't stop to frisk yourself in the middle of the street," hustling her across as a motor shot by.

"That envelope with the chicken!" still clutching at her bag.

"Well, what about it?"

"I—I LEFT it! I took it out to get at my powder puff—when I was sitting on that couch! And I forgot to put it back!"

"Chicken bones in a greasy envelope on that 'mulberry' couch!" he chuckled. "Put that decorator's color scheme on the blink if that gravy soaks through."

"Oh, she'll find it!" anguished Helen. "She'll find it!"

"What if she does?"

"Your name's on that envelope! Oh, what WILL they think?"

"Guess they'll think you left your lunch," he shrugged. "Not that I care a hoot, but maybe this'll cure you of lugging around bones for alley cats."

"Warren, WILL they think that? Can't we do something? Go back and explain?"

"Yes, and make it a blamed sight worse. You're forever making fool plays and trying to explain 'em!"

"They'll think we're so poor that I take food from restaurants! It'll reflect on you! He won't want anyone to handle his business who's so——"

"Now, you needn't worry about that," with egoistic complacency. "I've helped Conway swing some big deals. Your chicken bones won't queer me with him!"

"I'm just sick about it! And she's so affected and supercilious—I can just see her opening that greasy envelope!"

A plaintive "meow" from a dark doorway.

"There's your protégé," Warren twirled his cane at a huddled mite of fur.

"Poor little thing! And I've nothing for it."

"Might give it this," taking a bulging envelope from his pocket.

Helen stared, speechless. Then joyously snatched it from him.

"And you've had it all along? How——? Where——?"

"I grabbed it when you shed it on that 'mulberry' couch."

"And you wouldn't tell me? You let me worry all this time!"

"Wanted you to have a darn good lesson," grinning down at her as she fed the emaciated kitten. "Now, maybe when you tote around chicken bones, you'll hold on to 'em—and not leave 'em with your friends as souvenirs!"

Warren Drafted for Housework Proves an Awkward and Rebellious Recruit

"Nothing worth reading in the whole bunch," grouched Warren, turning through the last of the magazines he had brought into the bedroom.

"Give me that *Hectic Monthly*," Helen, convalescing from the grippe, doubled the pillow under her head. "There ought to be something in that."

"South Sea yarns, flapper slush, and 'How I Made My First Billion'," he flung it on the bed.

"Why, here's a story by Mildred Lucas—she writes awfully well. Dear, read that. Fill this first," drawing the hot-water bag from under the covers.

"How often d'you want this bloomin' thing filled? Every five minutes?"

"It wasn't hot. No, not the bathroom, try the pantry—and let it run."

It was Nora's Sunday afternoon off, and Warren's ministrations were grumblingly inefficient.

"Dear, how'd she leave things out there?" when he came back with the hot-water bag. "She's always in such a hurry to get off."

"Never mind about that! Your job's to get well. This darned thing leaks!"

"You haven't screwed it tight. I'll fix it."

Again settled by the window, Warren started on "Ashes" by Mildred Lucas.

In blissful relaxation Helen snuggled down, Pussy Purr-Mew in her arms. A cosy Sunday afternoon with Warren reading aloud! Dreamily she watched him.

How well he looked in that light gray suit. She loved his deep, resonant voice. She always got more out of a story when he read, for she was apt to skip.

"Oh, dear, that old telephone!" as the bell shrilled out.

With an irate grunt, Warren dropped the magazine and strode into the library.

Through the closed door, Helen caught only an indistinct mumble. If it were Mrs. Stevens, she hoped he would thank her for the chicken broth.

"Carrie," briefly, as he swung back. "They're coming in town."

"CARRIE!" Helen's shrill dismay expressed her dread of her critical, scrutinizing sister-in-law. "They're not coming here?"

"Just started. Be an hour yet. Where was I?" taking up the magazine.

> " 'Then, while the wind still sobbed and drummed about the house, another sound intervened—a low, shuddery——' "

"Warren, you let her come? With me sick—and the whole house upset?"

"Thought they'd cheer you up. This place looks all right."

"No, you can't read now! You let them come—you've got to help straighten."

"What d'you want done? Don't have to slick up for Carrie and Lawrence."

"This bed must be changed. It's always done Saturday, but Nora had so much to do—I thought it could go until Monday."

"That bed's all right. Doctor said you're to keep still. Now you lie back there and let me read to you."

"If you won't help—I'll get up and do it myself!"

"What d'you want done?" irascibly, flinging down the magazine.

"Get two sheets and two pillow cases from the hall closet."

A moment later came his shouted, "Where 'bouts? No sheets here."

"Right there on the third shelf—where they're always kept."

He came back to find Helen out of bed, dragging off the covers.

"Here, what're you doing? You sit down there and boss the job."

"It won't hurt me for a few minutes. You stay on that side," shaking out one of the fresh sheets. "Tuck it in well at the top. No, pull it over more. Now the other. Just look how she scorched that! One of the new sheets, too!"

"Now, don't start fussing. Fix this bed and get back in."

While dexterously she slipped a pillow into its fresh case, Warren struggled with the other, thrusting it in all askew.

"The blamed thing won't fit!" punching it with his fist.

"You started it crooked. Give it to me. Put these in the hamper."

The soiled linen crammed into the bathroom hamper, he again flopped into the chair by the bed.

"Warren, you can't read now! You said you'd help."

"Haven't I?" belligerently. "What more d'you want?"

"Why, you haven't started! Clear off this table. Take those glasses out. And run the sweeper over the rugs. She didn't do a thing in here this morning."

"What's the idea? Nobody but Carrie and Lawrence. Why all the——"

"Then I'll have to do it myself," again starting to get up.

"Oh, all right," with savage resignation. "Where d'you keep your sweeper?"

"In the broom closet—where it's always kept. Dear, bring a dust rag as you come. Wait, take these glasses out with you. And empty that waste basket. And throw out those flowers—they're all wilted and——"

"How many hands d'you think I've got?" as he stumped out with only one glass and the waste basket.

With guilty haste Helen now slipped out of bed and into the dressing-room.

Darting back with her best crêpe de Chine gown, comb, powder, and hand-mirror, she got into bed just as Warren entered dragging the carpet-sweeper.

"You been up again?" he glowered. "Puttin' on a lot of dog for Carrie? What d'you care how you look? They know you've been sick."

"Run it over that rug by the window—good. And pull down that shade! The way that light streams in shows every speck of dust," combing her hair by the mirror propped against her knees.

"Something's wrong with its innards! Wants oil. Hear that rattle?"

"You took up a hairpin. It won't hurt. Run it way under the bed."

"Think they'll get down on their knees to snoop under there? Here's that cork I dropped last night. Where's that bottle?"

"Right there on the table. Dear, hand me your nail-file. And take that old robe of mine into the bathroom. I want my blue satin—the quilted one. In my closet, left-hand side. And bring the slippers that go with it."

"Now you're not going to get up for them!" sternly.

"No, but I want those things here. And bring my atomizer when you come."

With his usual masculine density about her clothes, Warren brought three pairs of slippers before he found the tiny blue satin mules.

"Why all the scenery?" he grumped, as she draped the quilted satin robe over the foot of the bed, and directed the conspicuous placing of the dainty mules. "Setting the stage for a bedroom farce?"

"You didn't bring the atomizer. And take these back—no, wait, I'll keep the powder and mirror," thrusting them under her pillow. "And bring me a fresh handkerchief—my top drawer. One of those embroidered ones I got in Milan."

"Got in Milan?" with a snort. "How the Sam Hill can I tell a dago wipe?"

"Bring the whole box then. And look, dear, how rumpled this is," untying the red ribbon from Pussy Purr-Mew's collar. "Get her a fresh one, won't you?"

"Now, I'm not valeting that cat! Got enough to do tricking you out. Here, what 'bout your broth? Darned sight more important'n all this tom-foolery."

"I told her to leave it on the stove—all ready for you to heat. Oh, shut that closet door—they can see right in. And what're those socks doing on that chair? Put them away, and——"

Hurling the socks in the closet, he slammed the door and stalked kitchenward.

"Don't see any broth out here," he yelled back. "Where'd you say it was?"

"On the stove! I suppose it's covered up—just LOOK!"

A few moments later he strode in with the broth in the kitchen measuring cup.

"You'll have to eat out of this. Couldn't find anything else to put it in."

"That'll do," resignedly. "Now some salt—on the sideboard. And a napkin—the top sideboard drawer."

"By George, if this's what a trained nurse's in for—no wonder they pull down fifty a week," as he slouched back with the salt-cellar. "What's that? No napkin? Well, I can't remember a dozen things at once. Here, use this," tossing her the towel that had been wrapped around the hot-water bag.

"Dear, she wants some," as Pussy Purr-Mew sniffed at the aluminum cup. "Get her saucer—you've heated more than I want."

"Now, you eat it all," dropping into his chair, he took up the magazine.

"Oh, dear, don't sit down yet. She only does the kitchen and dining-room on her Sunday off—you'll have to do the library."

"Not on your life! Not do another darned thing," grimly. "Just because Carrie's coming for a couple of hours—you want the whole place scrubbed up."

"Why, dear, it won't take you five minutes. Just run the sweeper over and dust. If you don't I'll have to! I can't have Carrie see——"

With a muttered oath, he again flung down the magazine and banged into the library.

"Yes, you shall have some," as Pussy Purr-Mew still sniffed at the cup.

The spoon held over the towel, Helen filled it drop by drop while the pink tongue licked industriously.

"Where'd I put that dust rag?" Warren was at the door. "Here, what're you doing? Giving your broth to that cat?"

"I had most of it. There's a tea towel—that's what you brought in for a dust cloth. But go ahead, I'll put it in the wash. And be sure to dust the desk and the bookcase, and straighten those papers, and——"

But he had slammed the door to cut short further injunctions.

Again the telephone!

Sitting up in bed, Helen strained vainly to catch the import of Warren's mumbled monologue.

Silence. Then his steps toward the bedroom. The door swung open.

"Well, you can shed your 'Follies' get-up! They're not coming!"

"Not coming?" shrilly. "Then why did she 'phone? Why did she——"

"Had a blow-out—and their engine's on the blink. Left the car in a garage. Going back by trolley."

"It's always like that," with flaming indignation.

"Carrie always manages to upset and disappoint you some way!"

"Disappoint you?" he snorted. "Why you were sore as the devil because she was coming. Kicking like a steer about——"

"Yes, I know—but now that we're all ready, and——"

"Huh, now you're all dolled up and the stage set—don't want the show called off! That it? Well, I'm the one to be sore—had me hustling 'round polishing the whole place—doin' a spring house-clean! Now I'm through!" explosively. "There's your mushy old magazine," he flung it on the bed. "Read it yourself! I've done enough. After that dose of general housework—here's where I lay off!"

Warren Uncovers a Clever Swindle When Helen Buys an Antique Plate

An old frame house, once white, now a paintless grey. An unkempt yard with straggling shrubbery and a discouraged fir tree.

On the sagging gate hung a piece of cardboard crudely lettered:

"A FEW ANTIQUES FOR SALE"

From across the muddy road Helen sighted the alluring sign. The word "Antiques" was always an irresistible magnet.

"Dear, let's go in! They might have some wonderful old things."

"Now we're not going to miss our train for any old junk," grumped Warren, who had come out to look over some suburban lots.

"They run every hour! We might find a wall clock for the bedroom. You can pick up things in these old houses for almost nothing—and we're right here," pleadingly.

With grumbling reluctance he followed her across the rain-slushed road, through the obdurate gate, and up the shrub-fringed path.

Glowingly expectant Helen pulled the old bell that gave a remote tinkle.

The door was opened by a harsh-featured old woman in a rusty black gown.

"We were just passing and saw the sign," explained Helen.

"You can come in," peering through her glasses. "I'm only selling a few things to help pay my taxes," showing them into an old-fashioned sitting-room.

Helen's heart beat fast as she glanced about. A find! A real find!

The place was crowded with antiques. Everything was old from the hook rugs to the quaint colored prints. And over the fireplace hung a banjo clock!

"My grandfather built this house—it's just as he left it. It's mighty hard to part with things that's been in the family all these years."

"It must be," sympathized Helen, wondering what she would ask for the clock.

"That's my grandfather," pointing to a faded photograph in an old round frame. "Excuse me a minute, there's somebody at the back door."

"What wonderful things," whispered Helen exultingly, when they were alone. "I KNEW there'd be something in this old house. I'm crazy for that banjo clock! But don't say a word—let me do the buying."

"Don't worry, I'll not butt in. But you won't pull off any bargains! Bet she's got everything priced to the limit—looks like a wise old bird."

"Dear, they don't value antiques in these small towns. Oh, that quaint footstool—and that luster vase—— Sh-sh, she's coming now."

When the woman entered Helen was examining a fire-screen, purposely showing interest in something she did not intend to buy.

"Yes, my grandmother worked that. You don't see them like that often."

"What would you want for it?" anxious to get a line on her prices.

"Well, I refused eighty dollars last fall. But I've had such a hard winter—the weasels carried off all my chickens—I'll take that for it now."

Eighty dollars! Helen's hopes of bargain prices were rudely shaken.

But perhaps, because she mentioned this first, the woman thought she wanted it most and priced it accordingly. Other things might be cheaper.

"That's a nice old sofa," still ignoring the things she really wanted.

"Yes, that's a genuine 'Duncan Phyfe' piece—and in perfect condition."

Duncan Phyfe! So she was well up on Colonial furniture. Helen's hopes ebbed.

"Does that clock run?" with careful casualness.

"Oh, yes, it just needs oiling. That belonged to my great-grandfather."

"Pity that piece of veneering's off. What do you want for it as it is?"

"As it is?" sharply. "You don't get a clock a hundred years old without a scratch. Just to pay my taxes I'll take seventy—but it's worth much more."

Seventy! And Helen had hoped to get it for about twenty-five.

The footstool was thirty. The luster vase, badly nicked, twenty.

Warren, staring out the window, was whistling derisively under his breath.

"Well, we were just passing and thought we'd stop in," began Helen, planning a graceful exit.

"I've got some things in the dining-room," quickly. "Some china that belonged to Aunt Matilda that I'll sell cheap. I don't set so much store by her things as I do by Grandfather's."

The dining-room was also crowded with old-time treasures. The sideboard and corner cabinet filled with blue Staffordshire.

Helen's heart missed a beat as the woman took out a platter of "Washington Crossing the Delaware."

"You can have that for seven dollars—that's giving it away. But as I said, I never set much store by Aunt Matilda. And since the weasels carried off my chickens—I've got to sell something."

A "Washington Crossing the Delaware" platter for only seven dollars!

"What do you think, dear?" feigning reluctance to conceal her eagerness.

"Don't ask me," shrugged Warren. "Don't know anything about this stuff."

"Well I—I guess I'll take it." Then opening her purse, "Seven dollars?" fearful it was seventeen.

"Yes, seven. And here's something else that

belonged to Aunt Matilda," taking from the sideboard a ruby glass tumbler. "You can have that for three."

"Very well, I'll take it," trying to say it carelessly. "And how much is this?" examining an old octagonal decanter on the sideboard.

"I ought to get forty dollars for that—but I'll let it go for thirty."

"Um, didn't belong to Aunt Matilda," mumbled Warren under his breath.

"What's that?" she turned sharply. "What d'you say?"

"We'll have to be getting along," ignoring her, he glanced at his watch.

"You won't take that fire-screen?" as they returned to the sitting-room.

"No, I think not—not this time," Helen gave her a ten-dollar bill.

"Well, I've got to sell a few more things to make up my taxes. If any of your friends drive out this way, I'd be obliged if you'd give them my address."

"Yes, we will. Dear, you write it down while she wraps those."

"Jove, forgot to fill this pen!" Warren had drawn out his note-book.

"There's ink on that desk—115 Maple Road. I'll go get some string."

"Something phony here," scowled Warren, as the woman disappeared. "She's puttin' something over. She's got too blamed much of this stuff—I don't believe it's right."

"Right? Why, what do you mean, dear?"

"Bet that plate's a reproduction. For the real stuff the sky's the limit to her prices—this Aunt Matilda story sounds fishy."

"Warren, you're always so suspicious! How could this poor old woman way out here get reproductions? Why you can see they're all family things. She didn't like this aunt—that's why she's willing to sell her things cheap."

"I don't fall for that yarn. Darnation!" as his dipped pen left a blot.

Fumbling among the papers on the desk for a blotter, Warren paused with a muttered exclamation.

"Why, dear, what're you doing?" amazed Helen, as always so punctilious about other people's letters he deliberately scanned the one before him.

"Read that! You needn't have any qualms. She's put one over on you."

The brief communication Helen grasped at a glance.

> "My dear Mrs. Hubbard:
>
> We are shipping you another dozen of the ruby glass tumblers, but regret we are out of 'Washington Crossing the Delaware' platters. Expect a shipment from the factory in a few days, and will then fill your order.
>
> Very truly yours,
> The Bridgeport China Co."

"Now what about your poor old woman and her Aunt Matilda?" he scoffed.

"I won't take them!" flamed Helen. "She'll have to give my money back!"

"Huh, you'll never get your ten out of that old girl. She'll not give up——"

"I found this other platter that belonged to Aunt Matilda," as she re-entered. "I thought you might like the pair."

"I think not, and I—I've decided not to take these after all," stammered Helen. "We're not going right home—and they'll be so hard to carry."

"Why that's all right, I can send them—if you'll pay the expressage."

"No, I—I really don't think I want them after all. They're not just what I thought and—— Well, I don't want to take them."

"That's not the way I do business," bristling. "A sale's a sale! After wasting my time pricing everything in the shop—I mean the house——"

"You spilled the truth that time!" exploded Warren. "It's a shop, all right—fixed up to land suckers. This stuff's all planted here to sell. Aunt Matilda's platters!" with a snort. "Aunt Matilda turns 'em out by the gross in Bridgeport, Connecticut!"

"Why—what do you mean?" she spluttered, her face brick red.

"Better put those letters away when you've got customers. But I'll hand it to you! That weasel story's a peach!"

Livid with rage, the old woman fairly shrieked maledictions after them, as they made their way out.

Again in the muddy road, Helen clung shuddderingly to Warren's arm.

"Why did you egg her on? I was almost afraid of her. I never saw anyone in such a rage!"

"Peppery old hen," he chuckled. "Worth the ten to hear her squawk."

"But who'd have thought it? In this tumbled old house, way out here——"

"Huh, lot of motoring out this way. She's rented that house and chucked it full of stuff to sell. Whole place, sign and all, is a plant. Did you see that bunch of bills from antique dealers? Bet she does a roaring business."

"And I'm out ten dollars for a cheap platter and goblet," mourned Helen.

"You got off easy. Might've been stung for fifty. Darn clever stunt—salting that old house. Her stage-setting was great! The screen her grandmother made and her grandfather's clock! But she didn't fool me," with masculine egotism. "I was wise to her game from the first."

Then, as he swung Helen over a muddy pool:

"Never mind, Kitten, I'll stake you to the ten. Worth that to call her bluff. Ha, ha, wasn't she peeved when she found the jig was up? She saw you were an easy mark like most of the boobs who're dippy on antiques—but she wasn't countin' on ME!"

Helen Takes a Short Story Course and Defies Warren's Scathing Ridicule

It was only an ordinary square typewritten envelope. But in the upper left-hand corner was the magic lettering — "STANFORD'S MAGAZINE."

For days, Helen had watched every mail, dreading a long bulging envelope which would bear that name.

This was NOT her returned manuscript! They were writing to accept her story! This small envelope could mean nothing else.

With dizzy ecstasy she held it to the light, vainly trying to trace the lines within. Twice she started to tear it open, but in the background of her turmoiled thoughts was the primitive impulse to bargain with the gods.

From childhood, when she had wanted anything greatly, she had always felt that she must made some propitiatory sacrifice.

If this letter said her story was accepted—she would give Nora that brown hat with the orange quills that she was always admiring.

Fortified by this superstitious covenant, feverishly Helen tore open the envelope. Her heart in her throat, she swept the three momentous paragraphs.

"Dear Madam:

We are pleased to inform you that we have accepted your story 'The Compromise.' A check for $150 will be mailed you within a few days.

This story shows unusual vigor and originality. We like the realism of your dialogue and the restrained handling of your situations.

If you have any other manuscripts, we should be pleased to see them.

Very truly yours,
John F. Kemble, Editor."

In the breathless exhilaration of the next few moments, Helen, catching up Pussy Purr-Mew, fiercely hugged from her a protesting mew.

One Hundred and Fifty Dollars! It seemed incredible.

If she could write this one story, she could write more—many, many more! Her brain reeled before a staggering line of figures.

And Warren! The joy of telling him!! How she would now exult over his disdainful scoffing at her literary effort.

Ever since she had subscribed for that mail course of "Short Story Technique in Ten Lessons" his ridicule had been unmerciful. He had termed the course a "fake" and her resultant story "rotten."

When she sent it to *Stanford's Magazine,* he had snorted a contemptuous,

"Why burden the mails and some overworked manuscript reader with that piffle?"

And now that 'piffle' had not only been accepted, but the editor had written her a personal letter saying it showed marked originality and realism.

With only Pussy Purr-Mew for an audience, Helen spent the rest of the afternoon rehearsing triumphant speeches with which she would gloat over Warren.

Perhaps a more subtle exultancy might be even more effective—to wait until they were at dinner and then quietly announce:

"Dear, you may be interested to know the story you thought so 'rotten' has been accepted by *Stanford's Magazine.*"

Or, perhaps more annihilating still would be a casual:

"Oh, I almost forget to tell you—I had a letter from *Stanford's Magazine.*" Here she would pause for the caustic comments he would be sure to make. Then, with squelching dignity, "They've accepted my story for $150!"

Again a dissenting mew from Pussy Purr-Mew at the ecstatic hug that followed.

Rehearsing still more withering follow-up speeches, in a flutter of rapturous expectancy, Helen dressed for dinner.

She was hooking up her new orchid taffeta, when Nora appeared at the door with a woe-begone face and a broken plate.

"It's one of the good ones, ma'am. I don't

know how it got broke—I was just takin' it down from the shelf—and——"

"Well, don't worry, Nora. It can't be helped. Don't get that roast too done—Mr. Curtis likes it rare. I want everything specially nice tonight."

The girl stared at this unexpected leniency. The breakage of the good china had never before been regarded with such complacency.

The familiar bang of the front door!

Trying to quiet her pulsing excitement, Helen lingered for a final thrilled rehearsal before she ran out to meet Warren.

"Left my umbrella in the subway. Rotten luck!" was his grumpy greeting.

"Did you, dear? Well, it doesn't matter! Don't give it a thought. I'll get you a dozen umbrellas, if you want them."

"Eh? The devil you will!" looking at her sharply. "What's struck you?" her flushed elation plainly evident.

All her rehearsals were forgotten. All her determination to be restrained and dignified were thrown to the winds.

"My story! *Stanford's Magazine* has taken it!"

"That piffle you read me?"

"The editor of *Stanford's Magazine* doesn't seem to think it's piffle," one of the rehearsed phrases. "Just read this letter."

"For the Love of Lulu!" as he scanned it. "Well, that stumps me!"

"And it's all due to that short story course you

jeered at! I'm going to write them about my wonderful success—it's only fair."

"'Unusual vigor and originality,'" snorted Warren, still puzzling over the letter. "If there's any originality in that story—I'll eat it!"

"I don't care what you say about it now," jubilantly. "You're not a literary critic—and the editor of *Stanford's Magazine* IS!"

"A pretty punk one, I should say. How in blazes can he print that maudlin, hackneyed stuff and hold his job?"

"It isn't so maudlin but what it's worth $150!" flamingly. "Just think of the things I can buy! First, I'm going to get——"

"Plenty of time to spout about that. Come down to earth now, and let's have dinner," as with a disgusted grunt he strode in to wash up.

It was not until they were half through dinner that Helen paused in her vaunting elation to remember her bargain with Fate.

"The HAT! Oh, I forgot all about that hat!" starting up from the table.

"Eh? What the Sam Hill struck you now?" demanded Warren.

"Before I opened that envelope, I said if my story was accepted—I'd give Nora my brown hat. I should've done it right then."

"Well, of all the batty ideas! Next thing you'll be — —"

But Helen had darted into her room beyond the reach of his sarcasm.

Wistfully, she smoothed the orange quills. The hat had always been becoming and it was as good as new, but she must not falter in her bargain.

"Hold on, don't give it to her now," scowled Warren, as she came through the dining-room. "She'll think you're crazy."

"I don't care what she thinks," pushing through the pantry door.

But she did feel rather foolish when she confronted Nora, who was lustily singing a mournful hymn as she dished out the rice pudding.

"Oh, Nora, while I think of it—I want to give you this hat. You always liked it so much, and I —I thought you might be going out tonight."

Nora's amazement surmounted her stammered gratitude. To be presented with a hat after breaking one of the good plates was mentally upheaving.

Flushed and disconcerted, Helen made her escape.

"Now, eat your dinner. Don't rush off on any more wild stunts," growled Warren, as she came back to the table.

"Oh, I'm too excited to eat. You know what my next story's going to be?"

"Huh, if that editor had one lapse of sanity—don't count on him having another. Must've been soused when he wrote that letter."

"I don't care how cynical you are now—the editor of *Stanford's Magazine* probably knows more about short stories than you do."

"If he does—he had a mental aberration when he read that one."

"It's for you, ma'am." Nora entered with a special delivery letter.

The same square envelope—the same engraved "Stanford's Magazine"!

"Oh, I know! They want the motion picture rights," thrilled Helen, running an eager fork under the flap.

"Dear Madam:

An unfortunate error has just been discovered. Two stories were recently submitted under the same title, 'The Compromise.' One bore your address, and the other was from Mrs. Margaret Martin of Terre Haute, Indiana. Through a clerical error, the letter intended for Mrs. Martin was mailed to you.

As we deeply regret this, we have again read your story, hoping we could use it. But it is so unsuited to our requirements that we are returning it under separate cover, with apologies for this blunder.

Very truly yours,
John F. Kemble, Editor."

Helen had read aloud only the first sentence—the rest she grasped in one agonized glance.

As her head went down on the table, the letter fluttered to the floor.

"Eh? What's the trouble?" Warren snatched it up.

Waves of scorching humiliation engulfing her, she tried to stifle her sobs.

"That's a damn shame, Kitten! I'd like to paste his map. Here, here, don't cry like that. That fathead doesn't know a good story when he sees one. Look here, I'll buy it for a hundred and fifty!"

"It—it isn't the money. I—I thought I could write."

"Darn glad you can't! I'm not keen on a literary wife. Too blamed temperamental—and they dress like the devil. Rather have you as you are."

"And I—I was going to make enough money to buy all my own clothes——"

"Huh, have I put up any kick about shelling out the coin?"

"No, no," still sobbing convulsively, "you're always generous, but——"

"Then why all this hullabaloo? Come, come, Kitten, you'll be sick."

Forcing up her head, he kissed her wet flushed cheek. Then, drawing out a roll of bills, he tossed them on the table.

"You're out that hat you gave Nora. Now, go blow yourself tomorrow—get some new frillikins. And chuck that fool short story course! Give it to the elevator boy. I didn't marry any female pen-pusher—and I don't want one wished on me now!"

A Missing Key and Warren's Impatience Contribute to a Flurried Departure

"Dear, I forgot to get any films!" dismayed Helen, as she wedged in the camera.

"Oh, you can get 'em anywhere," Warren was writing the baggage tags.

"But I want to take some on the steamer. Couldn't we stop on the way to the dock?" pleadingly. "We pass a lot of places."

"Now we'll do no shopping on the way to the dock!" grimly. "Here, tie those on," throwing her the tags. "Got in my field glasses?"

"Yes, right in your tray. Under your collars."

"How 'bout collars? How many did you put in?"

"That box that hadn't been opened—and all you had clean. But only a few ties, you'll get some in London."

"Hello, here's my raincoat!" Warren was exploring his closet.

"Why, dear, you're taking your overcoat—you won't need — —"

"Now you put this in," tossing it to her. "Room for all your duds—but you always crowd out mine. Now hustle along there! Ought to leave here in forty minutes," glancing at his watch. "Guess that's the office," as the 'phone rang.

While he talked to his secretary, who had called up for any final instructions, Helen, emptying the pockets of matches, pipe and tobacco, crowded the raincoat into his trunk.

"Now how 'bout it?" turning briskly from the 'phone. "These ready to lock?"

"In just a minute! Oh, the hot-water bag! Dear, you get it! In the bathroom," still hovering over the trunks.

"Here you are!" Warren strode back swinging a rubber bag.

"No—no, that leaks! The one on the back of the door."

"Why the Sam Hill don't you chuck 'em out when they leak? Why keep 'em hanging around? For wall decorations?"

"I was going to have it mended—just a little hole in the seam."

"Huh, got the whole place littered up with stuff to be mended. Notice you never have any of it done. If I kept my office like you — —"

"Dear, DON'T start on that! I'm trying to think if we've forgotten anything. Oh, that book on the Paris restaurants!" darting into the library.

"Where to Eat in Paris" and the non-leaking hot-water bag were crowded in together.

"Yes, you can lock yours now," yielding to his scowling impatience.

While he locked and strapped his trunk, Helen took a last flurried glance through hers. Had she everything in? Her shoes! They were the most

important, for she could never get shoes in Europe. She was taking five pairs—Oxfords, pumps and evening slippers. Surely that ought to be enough.

"Yours ready?"

"Yes, I think everything's in," with worried uncertainty.

"Where's your key?"

"Why, isn't it in the lock? Then it's just dropped out. Wait, I'll find it."

But a hasty search of the floor failed to reveal the missing key. It must be there somewhere! The trunk had been locked when brought up from the storeroom. She could not have opened it without the key.

"I've another one on a ring. Oh, WHERE did I see that? Just the other day."

With a grim disdain that always increased her nervous disconcertion, Warren, his hands in his pockets, watched her flustered, futile search for the key.

"Never know where anything is," contemptuously. "Got as much sense of order as a cow. If I ran my office as you run this house—you'd be taking in washing." His most exasperating slur, always flung at her when anything was lost or mislaid.

"I KNOW I had it yesterday," frantically poking under the dresser with his cane. "It must've dropped out and been kicked under something."

"Here, you're only wasting time. It'll have to go unlocked. Get a key made in London." Then,

as he tried to force in the lock, "Darnation, blamed thing won't go in!"

The tongue of the lock out, it would not fit in without the key.

"Can't let it go that way. Get me a rope—I'll have to tie that down."

"Why, dear, we haven't any rope!"

"Got a clothesline, haven't you? Well, get that."

"We never had a clothesline—she uses the dryers in the basement."

"Then get some string—anything. Quick! Got to move fast now."

Helen flew out to the kitchen and returned with the string box.

With a disgusted snort, Warren glowered at the snarled mass—the economical savings of many household parcels.

"Haven't you got a decent ball of twine? Too darn stingy to buy one?"

"Just a minute. Won't these do? I'll tie them together."

One end tied to the protruding lock, the other reached only half around the trunk. Helen's nervous fingers extracted still another piece.

"Now step on it! Ought to be out of here in fifteen minutes."

A precious half hour lost over that trunk! Helen was now in a nervous panic. A hasty glance at her "To Do" list. The still unchecked items were:—

"Fasten windows
Draw shades
Library table from window
Pull out all sockets
Lock hall closet."

"Now, dear, you see that all the windows are fastened—and draw down the shades. Be careful of that one in the dining-room—it comes off the roller," moving her precious Sheraton table from the window, away from any sun that might filter through the shade.

Next she disconnected all the lamps by pulling out the wall sockets—a safety precaution never neglected before trips.

An explosive oath from the dining-room.

Rushing in she found Warren fuming over an obdurate shade. Pulled too far down, it refused to spring back on the roller.

"Oh, leave it—leave it that way! You'll pull it off!"

But with his usual obstinacy, Warren gave another irate jerk.

An ominous rip, a shriek from Helen. The shade torn from the roller clattered to the floor.

"I begged you not to pull it! I begged you not to!"

"Didn't pull it. Darned thing wasn't half fastened. Well, leave it down."

"Leave it down? Why, the afternoon sun just streams in here."

"What of it? You got the rugs up. Can't hurt anything."

"The sideboard! It'll shine right on that old veneered mahogany."

"Well, I'll tell the superintendent. He can put it up after we're gone."

"No, no, I don't want to give him any excuse to come in here. With all our wine in the hall closet—even if it is locked. Dear, just tack it up some way—you'll HAVE to."

"Risk missing the steamer to put up a blooming curtain?"

But Helen, darting out to the pantry, flew back with hammer and tacks.

"Dear, get the ladder! Behind the pantry door," forestalling his inevitable "where is it?"

A moment later, Warren grumblingly proceeded to tack up the curtain.

"No, dear, that's wrong. It goes the other way."

"It goes any way I put it! You're darned lucky to get it up at all. Confound it!" as he dropped the tack. "Why in blazes didn't you have somebody here to help us off?"

"You know I tried," handing up another tack. "You heard me telephoning."

Without a maid and with Mrs. O'Grady sick, their getting off this year had not been easy. And as Warren's business trips were always unexpected, Helen had had but three days' notice before they sailed.

"There, you can't roll it—but it'll have to do.

Now here's where I 'phone for a taxi. Ought to be out of here by now. Risk missing the steamer to put up a damned curtain!"

"Why, dear, there's plenty of time, it's not ten —and we don't sail until twelve."

"Got to get our luggage through, passports stamped, and I want to see G. W. He's coming down to the dock."

It was a hectic last half hour. Afraid to trust Warren, Helen had to see that all the windows were fastened, and all the water turned off. Her forgotten sandals and a clothes brush were crammed into the suitcase.

"That string looks awful—like an immigrant's box," when a few moments later the elevator boy carried out the cord-wrapped trunk. "If I could only find that key!"

"Come on now," brisked Warren. "Not another moment!"

"Oh, I hope I haven't forgotten anything," with a final panicky glance about.

"Don't worry," sarcastically, "you'll think of 'em on the steamer."

Downstairs the superintendent was on hand to help them into the taxi.

"Thank you, sir," pocketing Warren's leave-taking tip. "Yes, ma'am, I'll take care of everything," at Helen's repeated instructions about the mail.

Their baggage piled on the taxi, they were soon whirling dockward.

"Well, we're off!" Warren leaned back and drew out a cigar. "Got a fine day to sail." Then scowling at her tense rigidity, "Relax! Enjoy it! What're you worrying about? Nothing more you can do now."

"Oh, I know. I was just wondering if I'd forgotten anything."

"Safe bet you have—you always do! You've no system, no memory! Why if I ran my business—— For the love of Lulu! Where'd I get that?"

Fumbling in his vest-pocket for a match, he had drawn out a small flat key.

"My key! My trunk key!" Helen pounced on it. "How did you get it? How—"

"That's what I'd like to know."

"It fell out of the lock! I KNEW it was there! You picked it up and put it in your pocket."

"By Jove, don't remember it, but guess that's right," with a reluctant grin.

"And you scolding about my memory—with that key in your pocket! If I hadn't lost all that time looking for it—I wouldn't have been so flurried getting off. I'd have drawn that curtain myself and not pulled it off the roller and——"

"That's right, rub it in! You hadn't a darn thing to do but pack a few duds. I'd all my business and everything else on my mind! And you'll have it mighty soft from now on. Nothing to do but loaf along—while I hustle every minute. Here, take your key and keep your trap shut. No chewing the rag on THIS trip!"

Helen Revels in the Thrilled Sensation of Being a Celebrity's Wife

"And a dressing room!" Helen drew back the crétonne curtain from the tiny alcove with its running water and mirrored cabinets. "Why, dear, we've never had such a wonderful stateroom!"

"Not bad," Warren was getting out his steamer cap. "Here comes your trunk. Where d'you want it?"

"Right here, back of the door," Helen directed the perspiring steward. "No, it stands up—a wardrobe trunk. The other one goes under the berth."

"Two trunks, two suitcases and a steamer roll," counted Warren. "That's all," dismissing the man with a tip.

"Dear, shove that big suitcase under this berth —that'll give more room. The steamer roll can go on top of those life preservers. And we'll put this——"

"Now you've got plenty of time to get settled," opening a bon-voyage box of cigars. "Let's get up on deck. Stevens may be here to see us off."

"Mr. Curtis?" one of the ship's officers was at their open door. "The reporters are waiting to see you. They're up in the library."

"Reporters?" Warren turned, amazed.

"Yes, sir; can you come right up? We've only a few minutes now."

"Reporters? What in blazes do they want with——"

"Tell them Mr. Curtis will be right up," broke in Helen with a silencing nudge.

Then, as the officer bowed and withdrew, she clutched Warren's arm with an excited:

"They want to interview you! Oh, how wonderful! You're getting famous!"

"Interview me? What the Sam Hill do they want to interview me about?"

"Business conditions—anything. You won that Hillman case—maybe it's something about that?"

"Not much, it isn't! New York reporters don't write up last month's news."

"Here's your hat—don't wear that old steamer cap! Oh, I WISH you'd worn your new suit. Wait, you've got something on your sleeve—let me brush it off."

"Here, I'm not dolling up for any reporters," jerking away. "Must be hard up for celebrities on this boat, if they have to interview me."

"Don't say that!" following him down the corridor. "Let them think you're used to being interviewed. Oh, it'll be WONDERFUL! I'll write Carrie to save the article. Find out what paper it'll be in."

"Huh, they'll probably get out a special," snorted Warren, as he strode ahead down the long white corridor.

The main stairway was crowded with "visitors," friends and relatives of the five hundred passen-

gers sailing on the S.S. *Paris*. Everywhere the buzz of farewells.

"Mr. Curtis!" The same officer, now stationed at the library door, put a detaining hand on Warren's arm.

Helen, just back of him, in a flutter of pride and wonderment, saw him instantly surrounded by a group of reporters with open notebooks.

"How long do you expect to be abroad, Mr. Curtis?" was the first question.

"About two months," brusqued Warren, glaring about suspiciously.

"What countries will you visit?" from a youth in a snuff-brown suit.

"France, Switzerland, England," none too graciously.

"Is this a business or a pleasure trip?"

"Both," curtly.

"I suppose you want to look over conditions for yourself? Would you care to make any statement as to the outlook here?"

"No, I've nothing to say," Warren drew back to end the interview.

"Will you step out on deck, Mr. Curtis? We'd like to take some pictures. Is this Mrs. Curtis?" turning to Helen. "We'd like you in this, too."

"See here, I don't know why you want my picture," blustered Warren. "I'm not going to——"

"We won't keep you a moment, Mr. Curtis," apologetically. "The photographers are all ready. This way, Mrs. Curtis."

Out on the sunlit boat deck two photographers had their cameras set.

Helen, in a whirl of emotions, gave flurried touches to her hair and veil.

"If you'll stand here, Mr. Curtis—right by the rail. Now, Mrs. Curtis, if you'll stand beside your husband," as Helen shrank back with well-feigned reluctance. "Just a moment, please," waving aside an approaching passenger.

For Helen it was an intoxicating moment. She could see the group of passengers looking on with envious interest. A passing steward was unceremoniously checked. No one was allowed within the hallowed radius of the cameras.

"Look this way, Mrs. Curtis," as Helen, who always liked her profile pictures best, looked out to sea. "That's better; now hold that pose, please."

The deafening blast of a whistle.

"All visitors off!" shouted an officer coming down the deck.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Curtis," one of the reporters stepped up after the click of the cameras.

"We hope you'll have something to say on your return."

A moment later, following Warren down the deck, Helen was glowingly conscious of the admiring glances of the other passengers. To be a celebrity—or, rather, the wife of a celebrity!

Her thoughts leaped ahead. Might not this be the beginning of Warren's career?

Already a successful corporation lawyer, with

his forceful dynamic personality, what might he not achieve? District Attorney, Mayor, Governor—Her mind quailed before the possibilities of further greatness.

"Dear, did I look all right?" in an anxious whisper as they turned down the corridor to their stateroom. "Did I stand well? Did I look self-conscious?"

"Didn't notice," with exasperating indifference. "Don't see what they wanted our mugs for. Must be hard up for news. Ought've turned 'em down."

"Why, it's a wonderful thing to be interviewed like that! Here's our stateroom—142. It's wonderful publicity!"

"Huh, lot of good it'll do me. I'm not a movie star. Where'd you put that steamer cap?" tossing his hat on an upper rack. "I'm going out on deck."

"Wait, dear, give me some stamps. I'm afraid I squinted—the sun was right in my eyes. But you looked wonderful! I loved the careless way you stood there, your hat on—leaning on your cane."

"Only got four," he was searching his wallet for stamps. "That enough?"

"Yes. I'll just acknowledge these flowers and the two baskets. And I'll write Carrie to get all the papers tomorrow—a lot of copies if the pictures are good. I'm afraid I moved. Will that matter in a snapshot?"

"Huh, those newspaper pictures are always rotten. Who's this from?" punching through the glazed paper of a steamer basket.

"The Daltons. Oh, don't eat anything now. It'll spoil your lunch."

But Warren strode out munching some large hothouse grapes, pinched from a ribbon-tied bunch.

Left alone, Helen wrote three hurried notes, acknowledging the steamer gifts. Then the important letter to Carrie:

"S. S. Paris

Dear Carrie:

A glorious morning to sail. We have a nice big stateroom—two beds, a desk and a tiny alcove. Think we will be most comfortable.

We had quite a send-off. Three reporters interviewed Warren and took our pictures. Will be in the papers tomorrow. Don't know just which ones, but please get them all. Would like twenty-five copies of any that are good—get ten, anyhow.

Love to all, hastily,

HELEN."

Hurrying up to mail the letters in the box marked "Pilot Mail," Helen was again throbbingly conscious of the interested glances that followed her.

With flushed elation she remembered how, on other trips, she had watched the celebrities who had been photographed before they sailed.

If only she had brought more clothes, so she could better "dress" the part.

Back in the stateroom, unpacking and straightening out for the voyage, she planned the best presentation of her meager wardrobe.

As celebrities they would probably sit at the captain's table. They must dress for dinner every night—and she had brought only one evening gown.

But she had her gray crêpe. Turned down in the neck and worn with her chiffon scarf, it would be semi-evening.

She had decided on the pose she would maintain throughout the voyage. A slightly "reserved aloofness" she thought most effective for a celebrity's wife.

Blissfully happy, she was rehearsing various phases of this pose, how she could be "friendly and charming" but still "aloof," when Warren swung in.

His cap was tilted at an irate angle. His eyes fairly blazed, even his cigar had a wrathful glow.

"Did you write Carrie to get those papers?"

"Why—why, yes," quailing before his menacing glare.

"What'd you say? Get off a lot of hot air 'bout me being interviewed?"

"I had to say why I wanted the papers. But why, dear, why——"

"You've made a blooming fool of me—and yourself, too."

"What do you mean? What——"

"Those damned reporters wanted G. L. Curtis—the Pittsburgh steel man! Canceled his passage. I was the only Curtis on board—so they pounced on me."

In crimson dismay and humiliation Helen sank down on the berth.

"Then—then there won't be a THING in the papers about me?"

"Hope not! Lucky I found it out from a man on board who knew him. Had the purser send back a wireless to kill the story."

"Oh!" in tremulous disappointment. "Did you need to do that?"

"I most emphatically DID! Think I'd let that fool story go through? Won't those reporters be sore? And the camera men? The way you primped up—and licked your chops over it! Ha, ha, not a bad joke—if it is on us!"

"I don't see any joke about it," crushing back her tearful disappointment. "We had nothing to do with it. They came to you for an interview, and——"

"Mighty glad I cut it short. If I'd shot off my mouth as you wanted me to—we'd have looked a lot bigger fools than we do. Cheer up, Kitten, we're not celebrities—and I'm darned glad of it. There goes the lunch gong! Ready? Well, hustle now. After that six o'clock breakfast, I can do some expert work with a knife and fork!"

Warren's Dominant Insistence Forces Helen to a Strategic Evasion

The dressing gong!

Above the roar of the waves and throb of machinery came the resonant boom that heralded the dressing hour.

Dinner! A long course dinner in the suffocating saloon—with every porthole closed!

From the mere thought of food Helen shrank with shuddery revulsion. Yet she had promised Warren to try to go in for dinner.

His own stomach cast-iron, he had no sympathy with seasickness.

"Get out on deck," he kept urging. "Don't lie here and coddle yourself."

That morning she had dressed and dragged herself out to their deck chairs. But a half hour watching the mountainous waves had sent her back to the stateroom, white and shaken.

All day she had lain there fighting the nausea and black depression.

A brisk step down the corridor and the door swung open.

"Hello, all in the dark?" Warren breezed in. "Didn't you hear the gong?"

"Dear, I don't think I can go in to dinner," shading her eyes as he switched on the lights. "I don't feel a bit better."

"You won't—lying there. Get up and get

dressed. I'd be sick, too, if I stuck here," peeling off his coat. "Where're my dress shoes?"

"At the foot of your berth. They may have slid back—it's rolling so. Oh, dear, pick up that hot-water bag—it's fallen out of the rack. And push those books back—they're just about to tumble off."

"If you wouldn't unpack so much stuff—it wouldn't be falling all over the place," fishing out his shoes.

"I only take out what we need for the trip," sinking back on the pillow at a deeper lurch of the ship.

"For the love of Lulu, here's that cork you made such a fuss about! How in blazes did it get in my shoe?"

"Put it back, dear, in that cologne bottle on the washstand. That's just paper I stopped it up with. And hand me those smelling salts—they rolled off the bed."

"I'm dressing," curtly. "Get the steward to wait on you. If you're going to stay here, you want to order your dinner, anyway."

"No, no, I don't want a thing."

"Now see here, you'll not get any better if you don't eat. I'll order it myself before I go in. Darnation!" as a lurch sent him against the wardrobe trunk, knocking the shirt studs from his hand.

"There's one by my slipper," Helen leaned from her berth to help his clumsy, irate search. "There's another—be careful, you'll step on it."

Warren was thrusting in the recovered studs, grumbling, as always, at the overstarched button-holes, when the steward appeared.

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Yes. Mrs. Curtis'll have her dinner here. What have you tonight?"

"Here's the card, sir," drawing a menu from his white coat pocket.

"Let's see," Warren scanned the items with the lively interest he always bestowed on a dinner card. "*St. Germain* soup. How does that strike you?"

"Oh, dear, no soup!" shudderingly. "Just dry toast and tea."

"Now you're going to eat something! You haven't had a thing all day. Here's squab *en casserole*—you like that. And artichoke."

"Not now, dear. Oh, not those rich things now! I couldn't look at them!"

"Well, here under the cold meats is sliced chicken. How about that? Cold chicken, baked potato and salad—nothing rich about that."

"Very well," resignedly, "but no dressing on the salad—and no butter."

The order given, as the door closed after the steward Helen turned her face to the wall, fighting the dizzy nausea brought on by the least exertion.

"Where's my clothes brush?" growled Warren. "Bet you forgot to put it in."

"Right there in your suitcase," weakly. "The left-hand side."

"Want me to wait till that Johnnie brings your dinner?" Warren, now dressed, was brushing his dinner coat.

"No, no, dear, you go on in—I'll be all right. Turn off some of those lights. No, that one there—it shines right in my eyes."

"Don't go to sleep now. Your dinner'll be here in a minute. Here're those almonds—if you want something to nibble on."

As the door banged after him Helen thrust away the jar of nuts. Something to nibble on! Food! Food! Was it all he ever thought about?

She closed her eyes to shut out his bathrobe swaying on the wall. All day it had hung there swinging back and forth.

If she could have some air! But waves still lashed against the porthole.

A knock!

The steward entered with a napkin-covered tray.

"Set it on that chair—I won't have it just yet. Will you take down that bathrobe? It keeps swinging. Yes, that's all," dismissingly.

The tray, as always on the French line, was daintily appetizing. Two thin slices of chicken, white meat, a baked potato, and lettuce and tomato salad. A crisp dinner roll and a square of unsalted butter. In the glass of water glistened a piece of ice—the discerning steward's tribute to Americans.

But, at a sickening pitch, Helen curled down.

Quiet—just to lie there, not to move or speak. Just now life had nothing better to offer.

A warning clink of dishes. Would they slide off? She should set the tray on the floor—but she shrank from even that slight exertion.

What was that flapping sound? The buttons on Warren's sweater hanging by the door. With every roll of the ship it swung against the woodwork.

Only the third day out! Five more days of this before they reached Havre!

She tried to think of Paris, London. And this year they were going to Switzerland. Geneva—Lucerne! But even the thrill of unexplored foreign cities failed to distract her now. Nothing seemed worth this anguish.

If only she could drowse off again. Her only relief was in fitful dozes.

An hour later Warren, slamming in, roused her from a kindly oblivion.

"Well, how goes it?" his geniality proclaiming he had dined well. "Feeling better?"

"Not much," shrinking from his briskness.

"Get enough to eat?" Then, as he saw the untouched tray, "What's the matter? What're you waiting for?"

"Dear, I just couldn't——"

"Now, none of that," sternly. "You'll not be better till you get some food in your stomach. Here, I'll fix you. Want this chicken cut up? Nice mealy potato?" he was scooping it out. "How d'you want it? Little butter?"

The napkin spread over the bedcovers, he placed on it the plate with the cut-up chicken and scooped-out potato.

"There you are! Now go to it—I want to see you eat." He was standing inexorably over her.

Helen gulped and forked at a bit of chicken.

"Don't play with it, eat it!" brutally. "You've humored yourself long enough. Your stomach'll not be any better till you put something in it."

A knock at the half-open door, and the steward entered.

"There's a big ship out here, sir. She's all lit up. You can see her from your porthole."

After the monotony of three days at sea, the diversion of a passing steamer was an event worthy of being announced by an attentive steward.

"By Jove, she's near!" Warren was peering out the dripping porthole. "She's four funnels. Must be the *Aquitania*—she's due in New York Saturday."

"Go out on deck, dear, you can't see here."

"You eat your dinner"—snatching his cap. "I'll be back in a minute."

Alone, Helen forked at the cut-up chicken. Tremulously she lifted a morsel to her lips. No, she COULD not!

Yet how escape Warren's grim conviction that food was what she needed? Once he took a stand he was inflexible. If he found the plate still untouched——

But why should he? Why could she not——

For the moment her seasickness was surmounted by a flashing inspiration.

Rising on her elbow she snatched a magazine from the rack above. Turning to the advertising pages in the back, ruthlessly she tore out a leaf.

Then, with anxious glances toward the door, she scraped the chicken and potato from the plate on to the smiling countenance of the inane blonde advertising a popular tooth paste.

Quickly made into a small parcel, protected by another advertisement so the grease would not soak through, she thrust it on the rack under her dressing gown. It would be safe there until she could throw it overboard.

She had just settled back on the pillow and was crumbling the roll which had been too large to dispose of when Warren strode back.

"It's the *Aquitania,* all right. She just sent a wireless that there's a storm ahead of us. That's why she's late—about five hours."

"A storm?" quivered Helen. "It's going to be worse than this?"

"Don't call this a storm, do you? Want it a little rough so you'll know you're at sea."

Then his glance fell on the depleted plate.

"Fine, Kitten! Licked it up, did you? That's great. Feel better all ready, don't you?"

"A little," truthfully, for the mere removal of food had brought some relief.

"What'd I tell you? All you needed was food. Can't run an engine without coal. Stoking up—

that's what you wanted. Feel like a nap now? I'm going up in the smoking room. Want these lights out?"

Giving her tumbled hair a heavy pat, meant for an approving caress, he took a handful of cigars from a bon-voyage box and switched off the lights.

"Now you have a snooze," as he swung out. "You'll be all right in the morning. A good breakfast and lunch tomorrow and you'll be playing shuffleboard before dinner!"

Breakfast and lunch tomorrow! And a worse storm ahead!

But Helen's wretchedness was tempered by an ironic exultation as she glanced up at the magazine on the rack above. It was a generously thick monthly—plenty of advertising pages for the discreet disposal of future meals!

PART III

BICKERING THROUGH EUROPE

Warren Growls at the Old-World Discomforts of a Quaint Parisian Hotel

"They'll have to give us a better room! We can't sleep in that another night," Helen, thrusting in a final hairpin, gazed resentfully in the mirror at the narrow tumbled bed.

"I slept all right," Warren poured his coffee from the brown glazed pot.

"Yes, you rolled to the center and I hung over the edge. I didn't sleep an hour all night," drawing a chair to the small table that held the breakfast tray. "They told us it was a double bed—why it's hardly three-quarters!"

"Punk coffee!" grumbled Warren, adding more hot milk to the strong chicory mixture.

"You never get good coffee in Paris. Dear, tell them as we go out that we MUST have a room with twin beds—or at least a double bed!"

"All they had last night. Darn lucky to get it," buttering one of the crescent rolls, which, with the *café au lait*, comprised the scant French breakfast.

"When we get in late at night, we have to take anything. But we don't have to stay," viewing the one-windowed room with increased disfavor.

The fact that it had a bath, a rare luxury in the small Parisian hotel, could not compensate for the three-quarter, sag-in-the-middle bed.

"Now stir your stumps!" Warren, crumpling

his paper napkin, tossed it on the tray. "Got to get an early start if we're to gun up another room."

Ten minutes later they were walking down the three flights. The self-running lift, with typical French economy, could be used only to take guests up.

At the office the severe-faced woman, who spoke English, said there was no other room. Their complaint about the narrow bed, she shruggingly dismissed.

"We often have two people in that room. This is the first complaint."

"And it's a good strong one!" brusqued Warren, resenting her haughty independence. "If you can't give us another room, we'll check out."

"That is your privilege," with a frigid smile. "I'm afraid you'll find every hotel in Paris full. If you're leaving, kindly let us know before twelve."

"I'll let you know now!" curtly. "We'll have our trunks out by noon."

"Oh, she was horrid!" flamed Helen, as they passed the bumble-bee-jacketed doorboy, ignoring his tip-expectant offer to call a taxi.

"Crabbed old cluck. Now, where d'we want to go first?" waving his cane at a taxi. "A bunch of hotels on the Rue Cambon. Want to try along there?"

Her headache from the sleepless night, and her rankling resentment at the acid room clerk were

forgotten in the charm of the festive, sunlit streets.

Paris at nine in the morning!

The flower stalls! Shawl-headed women with great baskets of carnations and roses. The two-wheeled carts loaded with fresh vegetables—vivid greens and reds. Bakery pushcarts heaped with glazed bread in yard-long loaves.

And the outdoor cafés—the real allurements of Paris!

Awnings were being lowered over the sidewalk tables. White-aproned waiters were polishing the marble tops and bringing out the wicker chairs, making ready for the "apéritif" and "déjeuner" trade.

Shopkeepers, in their long linen coats, were arranging their "bargain" wares in trays and baskets on the outdoor counters. For the Parisians not only love to eat and drink on the street but shop there as well.

Every store, even the great Bon-Marché, Galeries Lafayette, and Printemps, has its sidewalk counters with clerks in charge. Here one may buy everything from sleazy ill-shaped stockings to a flask of exquisite French perfume.

"*Quel numéro?*" called the driver, slowing up as they swung into the Rue Cambon.

Warren motioned him to stop at the first hotel, a few houses beyond.

"Have you reservations?" was the disconcerting inquiry of the frosty-faced woman in the office. "No?" icily. "Oh, then we have nothing."

"They're all so independent," resented Helen when they walked on to the next hotel, motioning the taxi to follow.

Again they were told "all our rooms are engaged," implying that only presumptuous Americans would expect rooms without writing or wiring in advance.

At a hotel farther down there was one room—a canceled reservation.

"You look at it. I'll wait here," Warren took up a risqué French weekly.

The inevitable woman room clerk ushered Helen into the tiny lift, pushing the button "3," which took them up to the third floor.

The room was most attractive with satinwood furniture, long red damask window draperies, and twin beds. No bath, but running water in the deep alcove.

Inwardly jubilant, Helen inquired the price.

"Oh, we only want breakfast," when the woman quoted "en pension" terms.

"Our rooms are rented with all meals," in broken but haughty English.

"We might take lunch. Would you make a rate for breakfast and lunch?"

"No, madame," crushingly. "We have only one rate."

The walk down the red-carpeted stairs was in militant silence.

"Thank you very much," Helen murmured

with a warning, "I'll-tell-you-when-we-get-outside" glance at Warren.

"What's the trouble? Didn't like it?" as they came out into the street.

"A lovely big room with two beds—but we'd have to take all our meals!"

"That's the holdup, eh? See 'em to blazes first! Paris so filled up with fool Americans chucking their coin about—all these hotels are spoiled rotten. Well, if we're to gun around any longer—we'll let this Johnnie go."

The taxi dismissed, they tried four other hotels in the neighboring streets. All gloatingly announced "No vacancies."

"We're up against it," grumped Warren. "Guess we'll have to eat crow and go back to that 'ponsian' place."

"And take all our meals there? When we love the outdoor restaurants?"

"Don't see that we've got much choice. Either that or a park bench!"

"Isn't that a hotel sign over that lace shop? Dear, let's try that."

It was a shabby, ancient building. A narrow side passage led back of the shop to the hotel that opened on a dingy glass-roofed court.

No one in the small office, they had time to glance around. An unpretentious place not fixed up for Americans. In the old pigeon-holed mail rack, behind the desk, the few letters were unmistakably French.

A stout woman now emerged from a dark room beyond. Not a haughty lady room clerk, but a genial proprietress, who spoke but little English.

Yes, she had two small rooms that went together, a bed in each. No, they need not take their meals there unless they wished. And the rate for the rooms seemed unbelievably cheap.

"Dear, you come, too," urged Helen as the woman led the way up narrow, dark steps.

At the top of the second flight she opened the door into a tiny low-ceilinged room, with a quaint wooden bed. From this, two steps led to the lower level of the other room, almost as small.

The worn, uneven floor, the narrow-paned windows and the low ceilings were eloquent of Old Paris. The electric light wire that crossed the ceiling, and the stationary washstand in the rear room were the only modern notes.

A maid, clattering up the stairs, summoned her mistress to the telephone.

"The quaintest old-world place!" enthused Helen when they were left alone.

"Huh, too quaint for me! I call this pretty ratty," Warren thumped the low, blistered ceiling with his fist.

"Dear, it's central and cheap and running water! What else do you want?"

"I'd like a little elbow room. Cheerful view!" sarcastically, for the small window looked out on warped roofs and sooty chimneys. "Rum old joint."

"But we're never in our room. We're out all day. Oh, I love these uneven floors—these funny old steps down to this other room."

"Won't be so funny if you tumble down there and break your neck. Where'll we put our trunks?" he scowled. "Hang 'em on the ceiling?"

"We'll have her take that table out and put one there."

"No closet? No place to hang a blamed thing. Not even a clothes-tree."

"Look, an old chimney cupboard!" discovering a narrow cupboard in the wall. "You can't see it when the door's closed—papered right over. And this queer old grate! Dear, we can go to a modern hotel anywhere, but this's too quaint for words. Here she comes! Make a deposit," eagerly, "so we'll be sure of it."

At her nudging insistence Warren made a deposit, saying they would bring their trunks at once.

"Dear, why were you so grumpy?" when they finally came out through the passage to the street. "To find a place like that—and at that price!"

"Huh, you'd throw a fit at such a dump at home! That night at Trenton when we stopped at that hotel near the station—you put up an awful howl."

"Oh, that was a horrid third-rate place! But here it's part of the atmosphere of Old Paris."

"Well, that atmosphere's pretty thick," bundling her into a taxi. "You're so all-fired particular about things being clean, yet you O. K. that——"

"It IS clean! You saw me look at the beds. The blankets were brand new."

"Didn't see anything new in that dive. But if you can stand for it, I can. You've done most of the kicking on this trip."

"We're going to love it—I know we are! And after all those snippy women—she was so nice and motherly. Dear, didn't you like her?"

"She was all right," glumly, lighting a cigar.

"And think of what we'll save! I'd have been wretched if we'd paid for meals we didn't have. Now we can dine where we please. Oh, tell him to stop!" as they whirled by a flower-stall. "I want a bunch of violets—just to celebrate."

"Now we'll stop NOwhere!" grimly. "Going to get those trunks and then beat it for lunch. After eleven now."

"And we'll have a wonderful lunch," propitiatingly. "Where shall we go? Jouven's?" suggesting their favorite outdoor Latin Quarter restaurant.

"Yes, Jouven's all right. And we'll have everything on the menu," belligerently. "No holding me down on THIS meal!"

"No, dear, I won't try. We're saving so much on the room I won't say a word. Just think," ecstatically, hugging his arm. "Two weeks in Paris! Aren't you happy? Don't you love it? Oh, you're SO unresponsive! You just sit back and glower."

"Can't expect me to feel very peppy on that

breakfast. Two measly rolls and a cup of bum coffee," with a snort. "Just wait till I sink a little real food in this yawning vacuum! Then we'll sail out and do up the town!"

The Gloom of a Rainy Sunday in Paris Under a Quaint but Leaky Roof

All morning it had rained, a steady drizzle. Wet, warped roofs, bristling with sooty chimneys, was the dismal outlook from the small-paned windows.

Softly Helen tiptoed about, fearful lest the creaky old floor awake Warren. If he would sleep until lunch she would have time to unpack, get up the laundry, and write some postcards.

Three weeks of fast continental traveling with no stops long enough for laundry or repairs made her welcome this rainy Sunday morning. Here was a chance to get washed up, mended, and straightened out.

Paris, crowded as always, Helen had exulted in their discovery of these two tiny rooms in a quaint old-world house. But this gloomy morning their quaintness seemed somewhat sordid, and she thought almost regretfully of the modern hotel Warren had urged.

At least there was running water. The stationary washstand, plainly recently installed, seemed an incongruous note in these antiquated rooms.

But the hot-water faucet gave only a halting tepid flow, prolonging the task of washing silk underthings that she dare not trust to the laundry.

Where could she hang them? No place in her

down-two-steps cubby-hole room, which held only a narrow couch-bed, one chair, and the washstand.

Warren's room offered possibilities for a line; but she had no string.

With her usual ingenuity she pounced on the cord in his bathrobe. Pieced out with a corset lace it stretched from the bedpost to a hook by the door. On this improvised line she hung her gloves, stockings and lingerie.

A stir from the bed. A yawn, a flop, and a sleepy, "You up? What time is it?"

"Oh, don't wake yet, dear! It's a wretched rainy morning. You might as well rest. It's Sunday—there's nothing you can do."

"What the Sam Hill's all that?" glaring at her "wash."

"Just some silk things I couldn't send to the laundry."

"Well, while you're fussing around, sew that button on my overcoat."

"Yes, I'm going to—and mend your raincoat and that pocket in your gray vest. Oh, don't get that comforter next to your face! Let me fix it."

"Thought you said this place was so all-fired clean?" he grumbled as she folded the sheet over the dubious dark red comforter.

"You never want any hotel bedclothes to touch your face. That's why I loved the way they button on the sheets in Holland. There!" tucking him in. "Now sleep until twelve. I'll have everything straight then, and we'll go out and have a wonder-

ful lunch. Does that shine in your eyes? I can shade it."

To dispel some of the dismal gloom she had turned on the solitary bulb that hung from a wire run across the low ceiling.

"There, isn't that better?" fixing an envelope as a one-sided shade.

Warren dozing off again, she bundled up the clothes for the laundry and ripped the linen collar from her gray suit to be dry cleaned.

She was checking off her "To Do" list scribbled on the train:

Button on W's overcoat
Pocket gray vest
Mend raincoat
Spot on tan skirt
Elastic in bloomers
Two snaps blue crêpe
Spot on dinner coat

Always when traveling, a list of all needed repairs saved time. And now this rainy morning, with Warren asleep, was ideal for getting everything in shape, ready for a strenuous two weeks in Paris.

The things she had still to buy! While she sponged off spots and mended, Helen jotted down, as she thought of them, the dreaded "presents" that always hung over her European trips.

Experience had disillusioned her as to the Paris shops. Most things she could get better at home. But gifts "from Paris" were always impressive.

Gloves, perfume, jet jewelry, and anything hand-embroidered, were the best values.

The first thing in the morning she would start out for the Bon-Marché.

No, it would be closed! All the big Paris shops instead of closing Saturday afternoon did not open Mondays until one.

Then what would she do in the morning? The small antique shops! They would be open. She would explore along the Rue Bonaparte and the Rue du Bac.

If she could find one of those old book boxes! The tooled-bindings, with the leaves cut out, made ideal boxes for jewelry or cigarettes.

"Eh? What in blazes——? What the devil you trying to do?"

Helen sprang up, dropping her thimble, at this irate explosion from the bed.

"What's the idea? Trying to drown me out?" pulling at his pajama sleeves.

"Why, it's wet! Oh, dear, the ceiling!" as another drop splashed down.

On the low, warped ceiling over the bed was a dark, moist spot.

"Somebody upstairs is letting the water run over!" dismayed Helen.

"No upstairs—we're on the top floor. This rotten old roof's leaking!"

Out of bed, he shrugged into his bathrobe.

"Darnation!" as he fumbled vainly for the cord.

"Oh, wait, dear. I've got it! Here's a safety

pin. I didn't have a thing to hang these clothes on."

"Well of all the cast-iron nerve!" glaring at his tasseled cord that supported Helen's wash.

"Quick, we'll have to move the bed!" as a drop fell on the pillow.

But the old four-poster almost filled the tiny room. They could not move it far enough to escape the drip.

"Wait, I'll put something under it," desperately Helen glanced about.

There was nothing but the soap dish from the washstand.

"Where's that bone-headed maid? Punch that bell!"

"It's not the punching kind," turning to the old bell rope by the door.

The maid could not speak English, but the soap dish on the bed and the wet spot on the ceiling needed no interpretation.

"*Oui, oui, monsieur! Oui, oui!*" excitedly she dashed out.

"Dear, what can they do to the roof in the rain, and on Sunday?"

"Not a darn thing! How'm I going to sleep there tonight? Here's where you get your fill of these 'quaint old' hotels."

"This doesn't catch it," moving the soap dish a cautious inch. "Oh, look, you don't want them to see this!" taking from under his pillow his wallet, bulky with bills, passport, and letter of credit. "Where'll I put it?"

"Here, give it to me." He thrust it into the inner pocket of his coat, hanging over a chair.

A heavy step on the linoleumed stairs and the stout proprietress entered. She carried a tin pan which she placed triumphantly on the bed under the drip.

With a little English, many gestures, and much French, she explained they would put a tub in the garret under the leak until tomorrow.

Uncomfortably conscious of her laundry line, Helen hastened to show that she had not done all the wash, by bringing out the large bundle with the list.

"While you're here I'll explain about the laundry. I can't make the maid understand. Mr. Curtis likes his collars with a dull finish."

"Ze dull finish?" blankly.

"Wait, I'll show you," getting out the round leather bag. "Like this—THIS!" with shrill emphasis, holding up one with a dull finish. "NOT like this," indicating the objectionable continental polish of another.

With effusive promises that covered both the leak and the collars, the woman bowed herself out.

"You can yell at 'em till you're black in the face, but you'll never get a decent laundered collar in Europe," grunted Warren. "Bet they'll come back shiny as celluloid."

"I'm afraid she didn't like these things hanging here," worriedly. "They never want you to wash in your room."

"Huh, anything but murder goes in this rickety old dump!"

"Dear, that catches it," as a drop thumped in the tin pan.

"Big enough! Pretty hard to miss it. Fat chance of getting any sleep here tonight, if this keeps up," slippering down the two steps to the washstand in her room.

Scowlingly he tested the reluctant luke warm flow.

"Yank that bell! I can't shave without hot water. What d'they call it? Something that rhymes with mud."

"*Chaude*," laughed Helen, as she rang the bell. "Dear, it's so rainy, you'd better put on your old gray suit."

"Hole in the vest pocket."

"I just fixed that—and the button, too. Dear, instead of getting them both in London why not get one suit here? You've never tried a French tailor."

"No, and don't intend to. Think I'm going to wear one of those skin-tight, pinch-chested outfits? Look like they get into 'em with a shoe horn. Expect me to shave with this?" sniffing Helen's scented soap.

"Here's your shaving soap," taking it from the suitcase. Then as the maid entered with Warren's polished shoes, "Pitcher of hot water. *Eau chaude —chaude!*"

"*Oui, oui, Madame*," scurrying off.

"Dear, doesn't it look a little lighter?" Helen peered out over the old warped roofs. "We'll have a wonderful afternoon, if it'll only clear up."

"Coming down pretty lively now," standing back of her. "Rum neighborhood you dug up. What're all those old shanties? Been here since the year one."

"Why it's the quaintest old-world part of Paris! Lot of artists live around here. Dear, in this mist —doesn't that look like an etching? Those old gabled roofs are always picturesque."

"Picturesque?" with a snort. "If they're all as leaky as this one—must hive a damp bunch of artists."

Then, as he turned back to the all-important process of shaving:

"Now if they don't get that leak plugged up by night—I'll sleep in your bed and you'll park on a chair! I'm going to see that you get a good dose of this 'quaint picturesque' bunk," grimly. "Maybe next time you'll be satisfied with a first-class hotel instead of gunning up one of these ratty, leaky 'old-world' joints!"

A Discordant Trip to Florence With Count Morello and His Invalid Daughter

"Dear, if you tip the guard—we might have this compartment to ourselves."

"Fat chance of that in this crowded train! Darned lucky to get these window seats." Warren was piling their bags on the racks overhead.

"Oh, wait, don't put that one up," protested Helen. "I want it for a footstool," always an essential to her comfort.

"Want a magazine?" as a stand of Italian, French and English periodicals rolled along the platform.

"You might get a London paper. Oh, they're coming in here! All those bags!"

A heavily-burdened porter wedged in, followed by a pompous, excited Italian, who vociferously directed the placing of his bulky luggage.

Pushing up the arm between the two seats by Helen, he arranged a rug and pillow for someone to lie down.

Then, mopping his perspiring face, he dashed out down the corridor.

"A child or someone ill?" wondered Helen, appraising the expensive bags, all lettered, "E. L. M., Rome."

The *signore* re-entered supporting a young girl,

plainly his daughter. The *signora* followed, carrying another rug and more small packages.

With voluble solicitude they hovered over the girl—removed her wraps, covered her up, and then proceeded to take her temperature.

Strikingly pretty, with large dark eyes and lustrous hair, she did not look ill. But her parents watched every languid, listless move with acute distress.

The mother, handsome but stout, was chafing her hands; while from one of the numerous bags, the father produced a bottle of medicine.

The thermometer removed, they all three examined it with agitated comments.

Next a spoonful of the medicine was administered, its bitterness appeased by some chocolates from an ornate box of bonbons.

Now the corridor door was pushed open by a florid man with two bags.

Only five passengers in the compartment, he claimed the sixth seat.

With amused interest, Helen watched the vehement argument. The chorused indignation of the parents, with much gesturing toward the indisposed *signorina.*

Sullenly he withdrew to stand in the corridor, proving all the compartments were full.

As the train drew out, again their door was opened by a bustling, portly woman.

Ignoring the excited protests, she demanded a seat. The girl must occupy only one, or her father

must relinquish his—which he finally did. While the man standing outside glowered in—regretting his reluctant gallantry.

"I was betting on her," chuckled Warren. "Knew she wouldn't be ousted!"

"Sh—sh, dear, they may understand English," Helen warned.

"Not this bunch!" their unresponsive faces proving he was right.

"Isn't the girl pretty?" relieved that she could talk. "She doesn't look ill."

"If she's not she will be—the way they're fussin' over her. Don't leave her alone a minute. What's this they're diggin' out now? More medicine?"

But it was only *eau de cologne* with which they bathed her forehead.

Next a large thermos bottle was produced, but the proffered cup of milk was languidly waved away.

At this, anxious emotional tears from the mother! Tremulous dabs at reddened eyes with a lace handkerchief from a gold purse.

The father was now fumbling in still another valise. This time he took out a napkin and a plump roll sandwich.

To Helen's amazement the girl sat up and dispatched the sandwich with celerity.

This display of appetite made everybody feel better. The mother dried her tears, sank into her seat, and disposed of a sandwich herself; while her husband, standing up, bolted two!

The daughter, again lying down, reassumed her listless air while the rug was tenderly, garrulously tucked about her.

Having no seat, the father now withdrew to the corridor, where he was soon amiably conversing with the florid Italian he had ejected.

"Dear, look, they're like children! A moment ago they were at daggers' points—now he's offering him a cigar! And now these two!"

For the mother was also unburdening her anxiety to the woman beside her, who, equally forgetful of the contested seat, responded with effusive sympathy.

But Helen felt this friendly Latin good-nature did not extend to them. After the first glance, which appraised them as Americans, not once had any of the party seemed conscious of their presence.

A sudden turn of the train and the setting sun now shone through the window on the sleeping girl.

Instantly the mother jumped up. Murmuring something that might or might not have been an apology, she leaned over Helen, and drew the darkening shade.

"She could've asked me to do it," flushed Helen. "I was just going to."

They were pulling into a station now. A typical noisy, cluttered Italian station—with two uniformed *carabinieres* strutting up and down.

Venders of fruits and refreshments ran shouting along the platform.

"Want some sandwiches?" demanded Warren. "Two hours before we get to Florence."

"No, I wouldn't eat these station sandwiches. You can get some grapes."

Lowering the window, he leaned out and hailed the fruit man.

"Dear, don't shut it! Leave it open awhile. It's SO stuffy!"

But the window was not to stay open. At an excited, gestured protest from the mother, Warren was forced to close it.

"Dear, it's stifling! Six people in here! Surely we can have it open a little? If she's sick—she ought to have air."

"They don't seem to think so," he shrugged. "Now you know what you're up against over here —none of these foreigners want any air!"

At the next station the portly woman got out. The father came in from the corridor, took the vacated seat and rang for the guard.

Were they going to play cards? wondered Helen, when a folding table was brought in.

No, it was an expensive fitted lunch hamper they were now opening.

An elaborate meal was soon spread out. Roast chicken, boiled eggs, sardellas, sandwiches, cheese, fruit, wine, and other packages not yet opened.

"Able to take nourishment! Shifts her grub like a lumberjack," grinned Warren, as the girl dug her small white teeth into her second drumstick.

"If she's sick, how can they let her eat like

that?" marvelled Helen, seemingly intent on the darkness outside, which made of the window a perfect mirror.

"Always bawl me out for eating fast. Now you see the real thing."

"They just gulp! No wonder they get stout," self-righteously. "It's coarsening to eat like that!"

"Well let 'em stoke up in peace. Stop lampin' every bite they take!"

"They don't know I'm watching them," still intent on the reflecting window. "Oh, what's he unwrapping now? Cake? Two cakes! And they're giving her a piece of both! Dear, if she isn't sick—she WILL be!"

"Don't worry, that's only a snack for them. They eat over here—don't peck at things like you do."

The girl, again lying down and covered up, her parents, stuffed to drowsy repletion, settled back for a nap.

But the one electric light seemed to annoy them. Without a "by-your-leave" the man reached up and pulled down the little darkening bag—the night shade, with which all first-class compartments are equipped.

"Do we have to stand for that?" flamed Helen. "They've shut out all the air—and now the light! Why should we sit here in the dark? It isn't night—it's only seven!"

"No use kickin' up a fuss now. We'll be there

in an hour. If it weren't for the sick girl—I'd have marred his mug long ago!"

"But she ISN'T sick! If she were—I'd put up with anything! To eat like that—and then make us sit here without any air or light!"

"Yes, that's pretty thick. Come on, we'll stand outside."

Cautiously climbing over protruding knees, they slid back the door and stole out into the lighted corridor.

"Dear, we'll stay here until we get in," as they stood by an open window, taking deep breaths of the fresh night air.

The moon-silvered mountains, the lights of distant villas, the black reflecting lakes—the fragrance of fields and woods!

To Helen it was an enchanting hour that compensated for the discomforts of the trip. But Warren, tired, hungry, and irritable, was grumpily unresponsive.

At last thickening lights and houses proclaimed the outskirts of Florence.

"Better be getting our bags," he tossed his cigar out the window.

Entering the still dark and airless compartment, Helen gasped her amazement.

The sleeping family had appropriated the whole carriage. The *signora* was lying down, her feet extending into Warren's seat. While in Helen's snored the bulky *signore.*

"Well, that's what you might call nerve!" War-

ren jerked the darkening shade from the light.

But neither the sudden glare, the noisy lugging down of their bags, nor the escaping steam as they roared into the station, aroused any of the trio.

"Couldn't wake 'em with a bomb!" he grunted, shrugging into his ulster.

Taking down her traveling coat, Helen read the tag on a large seal bag: "Count Morello, Villa Fontana, Rome."

"Look! Count Morello!" she whispered, with an excited nudge. "Why, dear, a COUNT!"

"What of it?" handing their suitcases out the window to a clamoring porter. "You think a title's a sort of halo. Well, that idea got a jolt this trip! Got everything now?" glowering around. "Where're the umbrellas?"

"I have them," following him out with a backward glance at the titled family, all slumbering audibly. "I knew by their things they were wealthy, but I wish I'd known——"

"Don't worry! When you tell how we traveled to Florence with 'Count Morello and the Countess' —and what d'you call the flapper? Well you won't miss any tricks when you spill that yarn! 'Charming people,' " mimicking her company voice. "And what about an invite to their villa? Might as well cook up a good one while you're at it. Now you sit down here and watch these bags," piling them on the first bench. "I'll take this Johnnie and gun up our trunks!"

An Evening in a Vienna Cafe Instigates an Air Trip to Budapest

The dreamy after-dinner hour in a Viennese café!

The sidewalk tables, festive awnings, and wicker chairs. Coffee, cordials, tall-glassed ices, and passing trays of pastry. The drone of foreign voices and the throbbing waltz from the orchestra within.

Entranced by the exotic charm of it all, Helen silently sipped her coffee, while Warren and Mr. Goldschmidt, a book collector, talked "first editions."

They had dined at the Imperial. A distinctive dinner of Austrian specialties and light Hungarian wine.

Afterwards, a stroll along the tree-shadowed Opera Ring to this famous café, with its crowded outdoor tables.

Apparently, it was Mr. Goldschmidt's usual after-dinner rendezvous, for now a waiter called him in to the telephone.

"Dear, don't you love this?" glowed Helen, when they were alone. "You read so much about the Vienna cafés."

"That was a great dinner," Warren lit a fresh cigar. "What'd he call that sweet omelette? *Salz-*

burger nockeral, wasn't it? He tipped us off to some darn good dishes. Knows Vienna, all right. Used to live here."

"He's lived all over Europe, hasn't he? Speaks how many languages? Oh, dear, that poor old woman! Yes, do give her something."

From a bulging wallet he extricated two five-thousand *kronen* notes, as the flower-woman gave Helen a bunch of violets.

"What're you doing tomorrow evening?" Mr. Goldschmidt returned from the telephone. "A friend just gave me his box at the Johann Strauss —a new light opera."

"Fine! Then you dine with us at the Bristol."

"We'd better make it supper afterwards. All the operas start here at six-thirty."

Vienna! A Viennese opera! A box at the Johann Strauss Theater! Helen fairly purred.

"How far is Prague from here?" demanded Warren abruptly. "Thought we'd run up there for the week-end."

"Why not Budapest?" Mr. Goldschmidt ground his cigarette in the ash-tray. "That's the place you want to see."

"Too far. I looked it up. Eight hours."

"That's by rail. Why not fly? Only two hours by plane."

"Fly?" Helen leaned forward breathless.

"Would you be afraid, Mrs. Curtis?" with the slight condescension of the book-worm bachelor toward all femininity.

"No, I'd love to! Dear, can't we?"

"Don't know about that. Got to close some important deals over here 'fore I take any chances."

"It's quite safe now. Three air lines here—Austrian, German, and French. They all run a daily service. Safer than your New York traffic."

"That's not saying much," grinned Warren.

"Oh, dear, not after all that dinner!" restrained Helen, as the pastry woman paused at their table with her heaping tray.

"Long time since dinner," belligerently, choosing a nut-encrusted crescent. "Don't get a chance at Vienna pastry every day. Whole lot better'n French."

"No, no, none for me. Dear, if it's only two hours—we CAN'T go back without seeing Budapest! We may never be here again. Oh, we will go, won't we?"

"Not so fast! I'll make no promises till I look into it." Then, dismissingly, "What about a Jensen's Plutarch? Any chance of digging up a copy here?"

"I'm afraid not. A fine copy in a nice old binding sold at Lugano last year for seven thousand Swiss francs. There was one in Munich——"

As they rambled on about books, Helen again turned to her enthralled contemplation of the café and its patrons.

That man over there—what was he writing? A music score? The accommodating waiter had brought pen and ink. At another table, a studious-

looking youth, sipping coffee and cognac, was correcting a bulky manuscript.

Many were reading. A rack just inside held the Continental newspapers and highly-colored comic weeklies clamped on long rods.

The Viennese came here not only for their coffee, but to spend the evening—to read, write letters, even to play chess.

Why was there nothing like this at home? Restful, leisurely, club-like cafés with good music, where one could linger all evening without being hurried on by a rapacious, table-wiping waiter.

"Oh, isn't he wonderful?" Helen made eager overtures to a haughty Russian greyhound, who followed his master inside.

"That's Count ————," Mr. Goldschmidt had bowed to him. "His family was one of the richest in Vienna before the war. Now he works in a *weschelstube.*"

"By George, I remember him! Changed some money for me yesterday—that office below the Bristol. Nice fellow. Thought he was an Englishman."

"He went to Cambridge. We were in Trinity together. That's his cousin—with that girl in black. He's in one of the air-line offices. The hydroplane."

"The hydroplane? That flies over the water, doesn't it?" thrilled Helen.

"Yes, if you go to Budapest—you can fly over the Danube all the way."

"Oh, that would be ideal! Must we engage passage in advance?"

"Yes, they're well booked up. Most of them small four-passenger planes."

"Oh, I'm wild to go! Dear, we will. SAY we will!"

"I'll say nothing of the kind," shrugging her pleading hand from his arm. "And I've got it in for Goldschmidt for getting you all lit up."

"You Americans are 'way behind on flying," he laughed. "Everybody flies over here. You've no passenger planes in the States, have you?"

"Not yet. We can kill people fast enough by running over 'em."

"Very few accidents here—these pilots are experts. You really ought to see Budapest. Good hotel there, too—the 'Hungaria'. The best food in Europe."

"Now you KNOW you'll go!" urged Helen, at this appeal to his gastronomic proclivities. "And only two hours! We'll never have a better chance for our first flight."

"Nothing doing," grimly. "You can't vamp me on that. Been traveling pretty fast. I want to rest up this week-end. No new stunts."

Then drawing out Helen's wrist-watch, a tiny substitute for his own, temporarily out of commission,

"After eleven! We'd better trot along. Which of these Johnnies served us?"

The very moderate bill was paid with a sheaf of notes, enough, in pre-war value, to have bought the whole café.

A *gut nacht* to the bowing waiter, and they strolled down the moonlit Ring.

The fragrant night air, the prowling cabs, the shadowy side streets leading off to the dark unknown. The foreign spell of it all was strong upon Helen.

At the Bristol Mr. Goldschmidt left them, promising to come by tomorrow at six. They would have a cup of chocolate before the opera and supper afterwards.

Inside, while Warren paused at the desk for their key, hastily Helen scanned the rack of sightseeing and travel leaflets.

Yes, there was one of an air line! "Wien-Budapest."

"What've you got there?" demanded Warren, as they entered the lift.

"An aëroplane circular. Tells all about it. This one is only an hour and forty minutes in the air! Five hundred thousand *kronen*—how much is that?"

" 'Bout seven dollars. Cheap enough!"

Out of the elevator, he strode briskly down the hall.

"Why it's nothing! And the office is on the Karntner Ring—just below here," running after him. "Dear, the first thing in the morning—we'll get the tickets."

"How d'you work this blamed thing?" struggling with the heavy door.

"They leave at ten and three," intent on the circular by the dim hall light. "We'll go Saturday morning and come back——"

"Now I'm not keen on risking my neck just to give you a thrill! Here, hold this!" The lock still obdurate, he thrust at her his cane.

"Dear, you put the key in too far—let me try."

"These confounded locks—heavy enough for a vault. There!" as he flung wide the double doors.

The moonlight from the long French windows flooded the great paneled room.

"Look, dear, how wonderful in this light! It's like a dream! All Vienna seems dream-like tonight. The dinner, sitting out in that café and—"

"Corking dinner!" touching the wall-button that switched on the chandeliers. "That *Salzburger nockeral* was great. Have that again. He says the Sacher's a good restaurant. We'll lunch there tomorrow. I bank on his tips 'bout food."

"Then why not about Budapest? He said we shouldn't miss it. And we're so near——"

"Button loose," ripping off his coat. "Top one."

"I'll fix it in the morning. We can go by aëroplane and come back by hydroplane—over the Danube all the way. Dear, think what a glorious experience!"

"Where're my slippers? That darn maid puts 'em in a different place every day. Room's so big—got to walk a mile to find anything."

"I'll look—in just a moment," unclasping her antique garnets. "And if they've a daily service—it MUST be safe. Here're your slippers."

"How 'bout the plane that fell while we were in Paris? Papers full of it."

"That wasn't Vienna to Budapest!" slipping off her gown over her head.

"Might've been. Now stop harping on it! How d'you wind this dinky thing?" taking her watch from his pocket. "Now you get mine fixed to-morrow!"

"I'll put it in my purse now. Wait, I'll wind that. Dear, you always say the things you regret are not what you do—but what you DON'T do. And now to miss this trip to Budapest! When it's only two hours—and only seven dollars. Why at Atlantic City, just to go up for a few miles, they charge twenty!"

"For the love of Lulu, change that record! Once you start on a thing you keep it up till the cows come home. Drop it, I tell you," girdling on his bathrobe. "I'm not taking any chances in the clouds. Not till I know a lot more about it—or sprout wings. Seven dollars!" with a snort. "That cut rate clinched it with you!"

Then, as he stalked belligerently across the huge room to the bath,

"Now that's a bargain you'll have to pass up. We're not going to break our necks—just 'cause we can do it on the cheap!"

Flurried Preparations for an Air Flight From Vienna to Budapest

From the stone balcony, outside their room, Helen looked down on the noonday crowd in the Karntner Ring below.

Leisurely, foreign-groomed men, strolling to or from lunch.

Waiting for Warren, she scanned the tree-shaded street for the first glimpse of his broad-shouldered American briskness.

The Viennese lunched early. The outdoor tables of the cafés across the way were fast filling up.

The scent of roses in the sunlit air! From the heaping baskets of a flower-woman standing patiently before the hotel.

Another crippled soldier hobbled by. There were so many in Vienna. The only saddening note in Helen's joy.

A perfect morning in the antique shops. Now a festive lunch with Warren. Then perhaps a drive with him—or more "antique-ing."

"Hello, Kitten!"

He was standing in the window behind her.

"Why, dear, which way did you come? I didn't see you."

"Came in some time ago. Stopped at the office to give up our room."

"Give up the room? Why, we're not leaving? Not today?"

"Three o'clock," he grinned. "Here, lamp that!"

"Three? It's one now!" opening the envelope he had tossed on the table.

Tickets! The usual foreign leaflet tickets. But not railroad—for each bore the winged insignia of the Hungarian air service.

"Luftverkehr. Flugkarte. Wien-Budapest."

"We're to fly to Budapest?" she gasped.

"Looks that way, doesn't it?"

"But you said you wouldn't! You didn't think it safe. You——"

"Just stringing you! You fall for anything. Too near Budapest not to take it in—and might as well fly over."

"Oh, you dear, you DEAR!" pirouetting around him. Then, with realizing dismay, "But three o'clock? Why, we can't get ready!"

"Why not? Only take the suitcases—leave the trunks here. Back Monday."

"But I'll have to pack everything—and decide what to take."

"Huh, do that in half an hour. I'll help. Come on, got to get lunch first. We'll eat here—be quicker."

"Oh, I can't take time for lunch. You go on down," opening her wardrobe trunk. "Now, only the two suitcases?"

"They allow you fifteen kilos—'bout thirty

pounds, each. An average suitcase. But you're not to pass up your lunch. Can't take that trip on an empty tum-tum."

"Then bring me a sandwich. I'll eat it, while I'm packing."

"No, you'll take time for your lunch! We'll have it up here," punching the bell for the waiter. "Now I'll help," peeling off his coat. "What d'you want done?"

"Get the things out of that closet. Oh, the laundry—it hasn't come!"

"They'll keep it. Only four days. Fly back by hydroplane. How's that?"

"I'm crazy about it! If you'd only given me more time——"

"Tried to get seats for tomorrow, but all booked up for the week. Only these two—just canceled. Want this stuff on the shelf?"

"Of course—everything, if we're giving up the room. What'll I wear? My *beige* suit? Will it be cold? Is the plane all closed?"

"Don't know a darn thing about it. That's all in that closet," he flung an armful of clothes on the bed. "Now what?"

"Get the things from the bathroom. Now, dear, DON'T order much," as he opened the door for the waiter. "We won't have time to eat it."

"We'll take time!" intent on the menu. "Don't know what we're up against on this air stunt—so here's where we sink a good feed."

Packing the trunk, at the other end of the huge

room, Helen could not hear the order, but it was plainly a substantial one.

"What next?" briskly, as the door closed after the waiter.

"Why, look, you left all the shoes in the closet!"

"You didn't say anything 'bout shoes."

"Did you think we'd leave them? Now the things from the bathroom—EVERYthing!"

"Needn't be so blamed sarcastic! That's what I get for helping you."

"Do you want to take your sweater?" as he came out of the bathroom. "Oh, now what've you done?" at a crash from his overfull hands.

"Didn't break," picking up her jar of cold cream.

"Dear, DO sit down! I can pack faster alone."

"Hold on, not takin' that camera?"

"Why, I'll want pictures of the plane—they'll be wonderful to have."

"Huh, want evidence when you blow about this trip," he grunted. "But you can't take everything in your thirty pounds. Read that circular!"

"How can you tell what's thirty? You said a suitcase apiece."

"Not the way you're cramming stuff in. Keep 'em light! Don't have to take much for me. Just collars and my razor."

"That's what you always say. Then you roar out if you don't have everything. But this heavy bathrobe—you'll have to do without that."

"Great guns, you takin' all these frills?" poking

into one of the cases. "Where you think you're going—to a house party?"

"Only one dress for dinner at the hotel. And my dressing-gown—that doesn't weigh a thing. Now, dear, sit down and read—you get me all rattled. If we could leave everything in the room—but I've got to pack the trunks, too."

"I'm willing to keep the room. Thought you'd throw a fit if I paid six hundred thousand a day here. How 'bout it? Want me to tell 'em we'll keep it?"

"No, no," with her usual economy. "Not if we're to be gone four days. Now lift this one. What do you think it weighs?"

"That's under thirty. But don't stuff a lot more in it. Here's our lunch."

The continental luxury for room-served meals, a rolling-table already laid with cloth and silver, was now brought in.

"Fine! Put it over there—by the window," gestured Warren.

"You go ahead," urged Helen. "I want to finish this tray."

"Now you come eat your soup, while it's hot," as he ladled it out.

"Dear, where do we start from?" reluctantly sitting down at the table.

"From their office—just below here. They motor us out to the field."

"How big a plane?" breaking a flaky Vienna roll. "How many are going?"

"Small plane—holds four. Only one pilot—that's how we got the tickets. Somebody got cold feet."

"Oh, they DID?" her spoon poised. "You mean it really IS dangerous?"

"If anything happened to that pilot—good-NIGHT!"

As the waiter removed the soup plates and served the grilled mushrooms and salad, Helen had a disquieting vision of four helpless passengers in an aëroplane with a suddenly incapacitated pilot. Heart failure or a stroke.

"Pitch in now. Got time to eat—not to sit and moon. Snap out of it!"

"Dear, the larger planes have two pilots. Why couldn't we go in——"

"Everything's booked up. What're you kickin' about? Thought you weren't afraid? After all that bluff you pulled before Goldschmidt the other night?"

"I'm not afraid. But when you think of only one pilot——"

"Well, we got a good day for it. When you reserve ahead—you take a chance on bum weather. These mushrooms are great! What's the matter? Don't like 'em?"

But Helen was gazing out the French windows at the vivid blue, cotton-flaked sky. An ideal day. yet with only one pilot——

"I've had all I want," at his growled protest, when she started up. "Oh, I almost forgot the

things in here," opening a drawer of the great marquetry desk.

His lunch finally dispatched, Warren stepped out on the balcony.

"The car's down there now. Better speed up. What'll I tip the maid? Fifty thousand?" exploring his obese wallet. "Twenty for the porter and twenty for boots."

It was just a quarter of three when they followed their bag-burdened porter down the hall to the lift.

At the desk, while Warren paid the bill, Helen wrote three impress-the-folks-at-home postcards. All with the same sensational, awe-inspiring message—"Off to Budapest via aëroplane."

As she bought the stamps, two American women breezed up for their mail.

"——and we had to lose half on the tickets," the voice shrilly resentful. "But I told Fred I wouldn't THINK of it with only one pilot! We're going next week in a big plane—they're much safer. They carry two men."

"Did you hear that?" whispered Helen. "She was the one who canceled——"

But Warren was now busy with the head porter, who, pocketing his twenty thousand kronen, promised to take care of their trunks, mail, and laundry.

"A fine day to fly, sir. Your bags? The boy's gone on with them, sir."

Out in the sunlit street and down to the air-line office, a few doors below.

By the waiting limousine stood a group of men. and the boy with their bags.

"Oh, am I to be the only woman?" fluttered Helen.

"Your tickets, sir?" requested the attendant. "One of your bags is over fifteen kilos, but the lady is so light," with a gallant bow. "We can let it go."

The two other passengers, both Austrians, in front, Warren took the rear seat beside Helen. A friendly *Gute reise!* from the attendant, as he slammed the door, and they were whirled off down the Karntner Ring.

"Ten after three," Warren glanced at his watch. "This aviation field can't be very far out. We're two hours in the air—due at Budapest at six-twenty."

"I wonder if it's their first flight, too?" murmured Helen. Then tensely, "Dear, that woman at the hotel—did you hear what she said?"

"Talked loud enough," elevating his feet on their bags.

"She wouldn't go in this plane with only one pilot. She said——"

"Now, don't start on that. Forget it!" clipping a cigar. "You were so darn keen——"

"I am still! Only I—I DO wish it were a larger plane."

"Well, you can only break your neck once. Got to cash in sometime," feeling for a match. "Doesn't

matter much how. I'd as soon tumble down in a plane—as check out in bed. Quicker."

Then, leaning forward to toss out the match.

"Pep up, Kitten! No weakening. We're in for it now. You're always spouting about thrills—here's where you get a humdinger!"

A Thrilling Flight to Budapest in a Small Four-Passenger Plane

"A limousine on wings! Dear, that's just what it looks like!" glowed Helen, as they came out from the Customs shed to the waiting Hungarian plane.

"Hope these Johnnies don't overlook any loose screws," shrugged Warren, watching the leather-coated pilot inspect the motor.

Two grimy mechanics were testing every part of the plane. Vaguely disquieting was the solemnity of this final inspection.

"A mascot!" Helen picked up a black kitten playing in the field. "If we could only take her with us!"

"Huh, here's where we're tintyped!" grumped Warren, as one of the officials focused a camera. "Not very reassuring."

"You don't mean—in case of accident?" nervously.

"What else d'they want our mugs for? Front page, if we're bumped off. Here, turn around. Put down that cat!"

Their pictures taken, they climbed up a ladder into the plane. The two other passengers, an Austrian and a Frenchman, courteously conceded them the rear seats.

The suitcases stowed at their feet, the door closed and locked, the mail bag strapped outside by the pilot—and all was ready for the flight.

A roar of machinery. A shuddery lurch. They were bumping over the ground.

"Hello, where's he takin' us?" as they circled. "Wants more room to start."

Taxi-ing straight down the field now. Increasing speed.

The hum of the propellers. A rising tremor. The jolting ceased.

They were in the air!

"We're off!" grinned Warren. "Too late for rain checks. No backing out now!"

With turmoiled emotions, Helen watched the ground recede.

Soaring over the tree-tops now. Higher, higher —still higher.

"What? Dear, I can't hear you!"

"There's Vienna!" he shouted louder, above the deafening din.

Looking back, she glimpsed the smoke-veiled spires and the ribbon-like Danube.

"Off to Budapest by aëroplane!"

That pretentious phrase, written on her impress-the-home-folks postcards, was now an actuality.

Flying from Vienna to Budapest! A thrilled experience!

Her pulsing exhilaration now surmounted all sense of fear.

The earth, like a map, lay far below. The fields,

all shades of green and brown, ruled off with checker-board precision.

"Dear, look—that herd of cows! Like cock-roaches."

"What's that?" yelled Warren.

She shook her head. The cockroach simile not worth a shouted repetition.

The Frenchman opened a newspaper. Plainly not his first flight, his nonchalance was most reassuring.

Over a village now. Toy rows of red-roofed houses. A tiny lake, like a bit of looking-glass in a museum model map.

A sharp nudge from Warren. The courteous Austrian was asking her permission to smoke. She smiled and nodded, as he held up the unlighted cigarette.

Now past the first wonder of the panorama below, Helen appraised the appointments of the plane.

Like a well-built limousine. Only the seat straps were ominous suggestions. But the red leather upholstery was much worn—comforting proof of many trips.

An instrument to register speed and height she tried in vain to read.

Through the window in front loomed the head and shoulders of the hooded, ear-capped pilot. How motionless he sat!

No aide, no mechanic. Their lives depended on this lone driver!

A jab from Warren's elbow. A signal to look out his side.

Another village. A coil of smoke—and flames. One of the toy houses on fire! Ant-like figures swarmed before it.

Someone's home was burning. Yet how trivial and unimportant it seemed.

From this lofty perspective how inconsequential all earthly things!

A plunge! A sideward dive! A sickening drop!

The roar drowned her scream, as she clutched Warren's arm.

A steadying lurch, and they were again flying smoothly.

"What made it do that?" she shrieked.

"Air pocket!" he yelled. "Shooting the chutes!"

"Oh, I don't like it!" shrinking closer to him.

"May get a lot of things you don't like on this stunt. So darn keen on flying! Maybe this dose'll ——" the rest lost in the din.

"How much longer? What time is it? Half way yet?"

Looking out, he did not hear. She drew the watch from his pocket. Twenty of five. In the air only half an hour! Due at Budapest at six. Still an hour and a half!

A plane! They were passing another aircraft. Someone waved out at them.

Eager to wave back, she tugged at Warren to open the window.

As it withstood his efforts, the gallant Austrian rose.

"Better sit tight!" cautioned Warren. "Don't upset the boat!"

But climbing over his seat, he found the catch, and lowered the window.

"Darn risky thing to do!" growled Warren, as Helen smiled her thanks.

Holding her hat, she waved out after the plane, now far behind them.

"Can't have that open!" bellowed Warren. "Too windy!"

"Just a little while. I love it!"

Fresh air always a stimulant, this was like wine. Far above all dust and smoke. Strangely exhilarating—like after snow.

They were flying very high now. She could see the frothy chiffon clouds below them. Now they were cutting through a cloud—like a fog quickly passed.

Limousining through the sky! She hugged the phrase—ideal for postcards.

A rainbow!

Like magic the great luminous ring encircled them. Above, below—they were flying through it! No, it kept just ahead.

Pink, mauve, orange—the colors deepened.

"Great, isn't it?" boomed Warren.

She only nodded. She could not shout her raptures.

Another plunging dip. But now no thought of

fear. In this glorious azure world there was nothing to fear.

An exultant sense of power thrilled her. Attuned with celestial elements! If only they could fly on and on! Perhaps to other worlds. Why not?

That story of the mad pilot, who each trip flew higher in hope of reaching Mars. And his last wild flight——

A terrifying story when she read it. It did not seem so now. That urge to fly on! To leave behind the earth already so remotely unimportant.

A flight to Mars! Sailing on rainbowed clouds, it did not seem improbable.

"Too cold!" Warren, reaching over, slammed up the window.

The high moment was past. The intoxicating wind had whipped her thoughts to fantastic summits. Now she smoothed her blown hair and prosaically adjusted her hat.

The rainbow had faded. Only a faint arch of mauve still tinted the sky.

Flying over a river now—a silver ribbon through a patch-quilt of green plush fields.

"Danube!" shouted Warren.

More villages. Miniature white-dotted churchyards. Here and there a smoking factory. A quarry. A forest—like a patch of moss. But mostly the evenly-ruled fields—squares of green velvet and brown suède.

The Frenchman, finally pocketing his paper, peered expectantly ahead.

Helen could see only a dark cloud, hanging low over the horizon.

No, not a cloud—the smoke of a great city!

Budapest!

A dream city! Those round domes. An Oriental mirage rising from the clouds.

Budapest! Hungary! The exotic, gypsy land of Hungarian Rhapsodies.

Was that the great castle? That side must be Buda. And across the river—Pest, with its mosque-like domes.

Soon the city was beneath them. How strange the houses! Each with a dark inner court.

From their great height it was an abandoned city. The streets deserted.

On they flew. The same strange buildings with mysterious inner courts.

Where was the landing field? They were well over the city now. But still they sailed on. Much rougher, as now they were flying low.

"Guess that's the field!" Warren pointed to some great hangars ahead.

Lower. Still lower. A lurch for each descending step. Bumping downstairs in the air!

The field rose up to meet them.

The Austrian, gripping the strap over his seat, motioned them to do the same.

A breath-taking landing jolt! They were taxiing over the field.

Gradually slowing up, they stopped almost before the shed.

Dazed from the swift descent Helen was helped out by the field attendants.

Still under the spell of the flight she stood apart from the bustling activity of the Customs.

As air-voyagers their bags and passports were examined with courtesy and dispatch.

Another ten minutes and they were in a big touring car, bound for Budapest.

"Great trip!" Warren settled back with a cigar.

"Dear, the most glorious experience! Charioting through the clouds! Oh, I can't tell you what I felt up there! As though—we were in touch with the infinite."

"Yes, no kick coming on that bus ride."

"And we'll fly back! We'll never travel by train again—not when we can go by air," exultantly. "Dear, say we won't!"

"I'll say nothing of the kind! This pulled off all right—had everything our way. Fine day, no wind. If we'd got it rough, you wouldn't be so peppy!"

"Oh, I loved it! I'm still all athrill. Limousining in the sky! It's like a dream. Oh, the camera!" she dismayed. "We FORGOT to take any pictures!"

"Huh, short on evidence when you blow about this trip, eh? 'When we flew to Budapest——' " he mimicked. "That'll be your prize show-off for the next year. But Exhibit A—picture of you scrambling into plane—no have. Well, you needn't get sore, Kitten, it was a great stunt. May do a little blowing myself!"

The Enchanted City of Budapest on a Languorous Moon-Magic Night

"Won't have any trouble nailing a room here," predicted Warren, as they entered the great deserted rotunda of the Hotel Hungaria.

"Dear, get one overlooking the Danube!" Helen followed him through the gloomy grandeur to the office.

The English-speaking manager, summoned by the clerk, greeted them graciously.

While Warren filled out the inevitable police blanks, Helen, with her avid interest in foreign hotels, gazed about the old-world splendor.

The imposing central stairway with statues holding lighted globes, the rich carved woodwork, the lounge with its morocco divans, and the glass-domed dining-room beyond.

And all so hushed and sadly deserted. It seemed unreal—this echoing silence. None of the hum and activity of a great hotel.

In the alcoved lounge two men were having a drink. Another, a dozing police dog at his feet, was writing letters.

Just those three in all that luxurious expanse!

Only a few of the many clustered lights were on, leaving great shadowy spaces.

"Not very lively 'round here," shrugged Warren,

when they entered the dark polished wood lift. "Don't see how they can keep the place open if—"

"I love this old-world grandeur," with a warning nudge that the lift-boy might understand English.

At the third floor a white-coated porter was waiting with their bags.

Down the wide, dim hall and into a lofty room gloomed with the deepening twilight.

Only one bulb in the high chandelier responded to the switch by the door. But there was a lamp on the dressing-table and another by the huge canopied bed.

"No change for this Johnnie," Warren was exploring his wallet as the boy drew the damask window hangings.

"Then give him Austrian *kronens*. Yes, a good tip. He looks so poor."

"Well, they certainly hand you big rooms over here," grinned Warren when they were alone. "You could lay out a quarter-mile track in this hall bedroom."

"Oh, a wonderful view of the river! And a balcony, too. Do come out here!"

"Jove, this's great!" following her out on the old stone balcony.

The Danube at dusk! The four bridges, strings of beaded lights mirrored in the blue-black water. The heights on the other side. Buda! And the great deserted Palace—now darkly mysterious.

And on this side, Pest—the mosque-like domes suggesting the Orient.

"Dear, it's much more foreign than Vienna. There's a different atmosphere. Like a dream city! I felt that when we were flying over it—it's even stronger now. Don't you feel it?"

"Feel hungry! These air jaunts pep up your appetite. Come on now," he turned back. "You'll have plenty of time to hang out there. Got to doll up?"

"Yes, but it won't take me a minute."

While Warren washed, she took her gown from the suitcase. He should have brought his dinner coat. This royal old hotel seemed to call for formal dress. But coming by aëroplane for the week-end they had left their trunks at Vienna.

Budapest! Budapest! The magic of the name enthralled her.

Hungary had always seemed so remote. She could hardly realize they were here.

"I'll go down. Wait for you in the lobby." Warren was at the door. "Now, no dawdling! Five minutes—no longer!"

Her flurried haste deepened her color and the excited glow in her eyes.

A last glance at her joyous radiance and she hurried out down the hall.

Warren was not in the lounge, nor in the regal salon with its few scattered diners.

Then, waiting in the rotunda, she saw him swing in from the street.

"Hello, Kitten, waitin' long? Been out exploring. Raft of restaurants here along the river—

nothing but! Want to take a swirl 'round and look 'em over?"

"I'd love to, but shouldn't we dine here tonight? —just to help them out. That great dining-room —and almost no one in it!"

"Oh, they'll fill up—eat late here. We'll patronize 'em for breakfast and lunch. Come on! Feel like bumming around?"

"You know I always do," joyously, following him out.

Budapest—"The Enchanted City!" That guidebook phrase now seemed less boastful.

All along the moon-silvered Danube stretched the glittering festivity of terraced cafés.

"Like a carnival!" glowed Helen, as they strolled along the promenade. "Oh, that's an attractive place! And an orchestra, too."

"Just a café. Don't see any food there, d'you?" scanning the tables where only apéritifs, liqueurs, pastry, and coffee were being served. "Come on, I've a hunch we'll find a humdinger down this way."

Further on, an alluring garden with a rustic bandstand. Japanese lanterns glowed over the tables and among the trees.

"No, not here," Warren dragged her on. "See that place?" his cane swung ahead at a majestic white building, gay with awnings and lights. "That's where we're headed. I've a hunch that's the 'Dunapalota.' "

Warren's restaurant hunches were invariably de-

pendable. The lettering "Dunapalota," was soon decipherable on a fluttering flag.

Behind the green hedge of the long terrace gleamed the white-clothed tables.

"Dear, you're wonderful to find this!" as they turned in from the promenade.

The head waiter, welcoming Americans, led them to the one vacant rail table.

While Helen raptured over the view, the lights, and the atmosphere of Continental gaiety, Warren concentrated on the baffling Hungarian dinner-card.

"Can't make anything out of this—that's a cert! I can tackle chow bills in most lingoes—but here's where I'm stumped."

With the aid of the translating waiter, he ordered a vermicelli with poppy-seed soup, *paprikahuhn*—stewed fowl with paprika, a green and red pepper salad, a Hungarian sweet omelette, and a bottle of Tokay.

"Dear, this's ideal! Just look out there."

"Not a bad hunch, eh?" as, the order disposed of, he gazed out over the Danube to the dark hills of Buda, where faint lights outlined the climbing streets.

"And that must be a Gypsy orchestra! Isn't that a folk-song they're playing?"

"What're they cooking at that table?" Warren was always interested in any chafing-dish service. "Guess you can get some great grub—if you know what to order. Wish Gabriel Wells was here to tip us off."

"Dear, didn't he buy a palace in Budapest after the war? What did he ever do with it?"

"He's got it yet. Along here somewhere. Want some flowers?"

"Oh, yes, don't refuse anybody here," as the wistful dark-eyed boy offered a bunch of roses. "They're all kindly and courteous—and so poor."

"Nice people. If they'd stop having revolutions and get a decent government—they'd put themselves back on the map."

"Oh, look—the native costume!" A girl was strolling along the promenade in the gay bodice and full skirt of the Hungarian peasant. "Did you notice her necklace—those colored stones? That's the Magyar jewelry. The guide-book says that and hand-embroidery are the things to buy here."

"Haven't bought anything for Carrie yet. Might get her something."

"Why, yes, I got her that tooled card-case in Vienna."

"Not enough," he grumped. "You'll have to cough up something else."

As presents for his sister were always a bone of contention, Helen welcomed the arrival of the *paprikahuhn,* served from a great silver platter.

"The real thing!" was Warren's verdict. "What's in this? Green peppers, mushrooms—and what's that other flavor?"

"Some kind of herbs, isn't it? All their food is highly seasoned—they love spices. Here's where our paprika comes from."

Hurdling continents Helen saw the red-labeled can on her pantry shelf.

"Dear," abruptly, "that pantry faucet—the one that drips. Did we turn that off tight? You went in there last to get some string. Did you notice—"

"For the love of Lulu!" dropping his fork. "How in blazes does your mind work, anyway? Why spring that now?"

"It did sound funny," laughingly. "I was thinking of paprika—the can at home with the Hungarian label. It's on the shelf over that leaky faucet."

"Association of ideas, eh? Some gymnastics! Hello, why this hold-up?"

"For the musicians!" as one approached, passing a petitioning plate. "Dear, ask him to play the 'Blue Danube'."

"Can't make him understand. You'll only get here what I can point at! Jove, I must get some change. All I got," tossing an Austrian note on the plate.

Had the man understood or was it only a coincidence that a little later the orchestra swung into the "Blue Danube"?

That haunting, seductive waltz seemed part of the languorous night.

The amorous velvety darkness! The low-hung moon viewing itself in the river. The firefly lights along the Palace bank.

Helen, sipping the Turkish coffee and a golden Hungarian cordial, thrilled with the witchery of it all.

" 'The Blue Danube'! I used to dream of this river and just this atmosphere when I heard that waltz. And now—dear, I can hardly believe we're really here!"

"Very much here," he grunted, always irritated by her ecstasies.

"But it still seems like a dream. The way we came—that wonderful flight above the clouds! And now tonight—it isn't real somehow. There's something vague and exotic in the very air. Oh, I can't put it into words! But don't you feel it? Don't you——"

"Feel darn comfortable after that grub," brutally unresponsive to her emotionalism. "This's one good restaurant. We're going to hit it hard."

"Dear, just think—we're in Budapest!" her raptures irrepressible. "Budapest! It's all so different from any place we've ever been. It's all so foreign, so romantic, so mysterious, so——"

"Want a thesaurus?" he grinned.

"Oh, look!" eagerly. "Those lighted boats—down there on the river. They must be for rent. Let's take one! A sail along the Danube in the moonlight!"

"Nothing doing! Had enough stunts for one day. Gosh, you're insatiable! Here's where we beat it back to the hotel. I'm ready to turn in," he yawned. "And tomorrow's Sunday—going to rest up. Sleep late. No chasin' through any art galleries. If you feel so darn strenuous—you can do your rubbering ALONE!"

A Midnight Bath in a Budapest Hotel Lures Helen to a Rash Adventure

"I'd better speak 'bout breakfast," brisked Warren, as they turned from the moon-silvered street into the Hotel Hungaria. "Got to have it at seven sharp."

"You can always get coffee and rolls. That's all we want," protested Helen.

"Not all I'll want! No air trip on an empty stomach for me. We'll leave the order tonight. What time'll I have 'em call us? Six-fifteen?"

"Oh, I'd make it six! I hate to be hurried."

The spacious old-world lounge was dismally dark, and the office deserted.

"Where's the night porter?" Warren pounded on the desk. "Only a little after twelve. Somebody must be on."

Disturbed at his midnight meal, the porter, napkin in hand, emerged from the rear.

He could not speak English. But Warren, proficient in the sign language, and with the aid of his watch, conveyed his order to be called at six.

"Dear, show him that hydroplane time-table—so he'll be sure. Wait, I've one here," rummaging in her hand-bag.

With conscious pride she opened the *Magyar Légiforgalmi* schedule and pointed to "7:30"—the hour of their flight.

His careless nod was vaguely disappointing.

With three daily air services to Vienna, their prospective flight failed to impress this Budapest porter.

"Guess we'll have to take our chances on breakfast," grumbled Warren. "I don't know how to shimmy ham-and-eggs."

The lift-boy off duty, the porter took them up.

"I'd call this an early town," Warren jangled the tag-weighted key, as they turned down the long, dim hall, fringed with shoes awaiting "Boots'" nightly round.

In their room, while he switched on the lights, Helen opened a window and stepped out on the balcony.

Her farewell glimpse of the witchery of Budapest and the Danube at night.

"Now no time to moon out there! Got these suitcases packed?"

"All but our night things. Oh, I love it here!" wistfully, closing the window. "I wish we could stay a few more days."

"Huh, never satisfied! Always kicking 'cause you can't stay longer," thrusting his letter of credit under his pillow. "No time for a bath in the morning—I'll take mine now."

"Yes, I will, too," putting away a café menu —souvenir of an enchanted evening and an impassioned Hungarian orchestra. "But you go ahead, dear, I'll wait."

"No you won't. You'll splash 'round half the night. You go in now—and hustle! I'll take a chance outside," punching the bell.

"Oh, it's too late—the maids are off. You go on, dear—I won't take any."

But as Warren slammed into the bathroom someone knocked at their door.

A black-aproned man with an armful of shoes. "Boots" had answered the bell.

What was bath in Hungarian?

"*Bain—bad,*" trying him in French and German.

Plainly puzzled at this request from a room with a private bath, he motioned her to follow him down the hall.

He should prepare the bath first—then call her. But unable to explain this, Helen snatched her dressing gown and followed.

On and on, through the labyrinth hall of many turnings, and he unlocked a door marked, *No-Furdo.*

Like all Continental bathrooms, it was huge. In addition to the usual luxuries, it boasted a bed-couch, freshly made up with monogrammed linen.

Was it a Hungarian custom to recline, or take a nap, after a relaxing bath?

The ornate fixtures of tub and shower proved most complicated. *Meleg*—was that cold? She drew back at a scalding stream. The *Hideg* was the cold.

But how was the water kept in? That solved, the great tub was soon filled.

No soap. Never any in European bathrooms. Always a plethora of immense bath towels, but never a sliver of soap.

Budapest! Luxuriating in the tub, Helen re-lived their glorious three days. It would always seem a dream trip.

The exotic charm of the place and the people!

Reluctantly forcing herself out, she struggled with a blanket-size towel.

In her dressing-gown, her pumps on her bare feet, she gathered up her clothes and scurried out down the hall.

Their room? Panic-stricken, she paused. What was the number?

Forgotten? No, she had never known the number! Always with Warren, she had never gone up alone.

His shoes! But, leaving so early, would he put them out?

Shoes before many doors. European shoes. Even in the dim light—most unlike Warren's American oxfords.

Before some doors—two pair. One, short-vamped, high-heeled.

Ring for the porter! Must be bells in the hall—but where?

A long bell-rope! But that red light over it—and the ominous-looking notice in Hungarian hieroglyphics.

Fire! She dared not ring that.

Warren would be furious. His scathing remarks about her dawdling!

The lift! Two turns to the right as they got out—she remembered that.

Wandering on, she found the lift, made the two turns to the right.

Which door? Six on that side—without shoes. Safe to try them all. Their door would be open —the others locked or bolted.

Summoning her courage cautiously she tried the first. Locked!

The next—also locked.

This eliminating process brought her to the fifth—NOT locked!

The number "142" seemed familiar. Softly she pushed open the door.

All dark! In bed, he had turned out the lights.

"Warren!" in a poignant whisper.

Yes, their room! The moonlight on the bed at the far end. Warren asleep.

With relaxing relief, she dropped her clothes on a chair and bolted the door.

Never, never again would she fail to note the number of their hotel room.

Her night dress in the bathroom, she would not need the light.

Noiselessly she tiptoed across the room—to a blank wall! Their bath? The door—where was it?

A dazed moment as from the darkness loomed a bowl-and-pitcher washstand!

Not their room? That man in bed——

For a tumultuous second she stood paralyzed.

Then, stumbling over a chair, she snatched her clothes and dashed out.

A shout! A foreign voice boomed after her.

Frantically she flew on, down the hall. Stairs ahead! Not the great central stairway, but steep, narrow steps.

A terrified backward glance as she raced down them—to a locked door.

Trapped! Would he follow her? What did he think?

But only silence now. A baffling, ominous silence.

Another palpitating five minutes before she dared venture up the steps.

The office! She would have to go down and explain her predicament to the night porter.

He could not speak English, but at least he would know their room number.

Drawing closer her dressing-gown, her clothes still bundled in her arms, she scudded on through the zigzag hall, seeking the central stairway.

Steps! That man—was he following her?

Brisk, FAMILIAR steps!

WARREN!

Then she saw him, striding down the hall, his ulster over his pajamas.

"What the Sam Hill—Where in blazes you been?"

"Sh—sh!" darting towards him. "He ran out after me! He may still——"

"WHAT? He—who? What're you talkin' about?"

"Oh, not so loud! I got into the wrong room! Which way is ours? Hurry!"

Just ahead, an open door—the light streaming out.

"What in thunder?" stalking after her as she flew in. "What's the idea?"

"I got lost—these endless halls! I forgot our number. I——"

"What'd you go out for?" slamming the door. "What's all that?" glaring at the roll she still clutched.

"My clothes! I went to the bath—and these halls—miles of them! I—I couldn't find the room."

"The devil you couldn't! I was ready to raise the house. Thought you'd tumbled over that balcony—you're always hangin' out there."

"Oh, that man!" incoherently. "What WILL he think?"

"What man? Just what DID you do? Talk straight!"

"Another room—the bed, dresser—everything the same. I thought it was you in bed—till I came up against a blank wall there," pointing to their bathroom. "I—I got out somehow—but he woke and shouted after me."

"Huh, lucky he took it out in shoutin'. Wonder he didn't bean you with a chair!"

"Oh, what HAVE I done?" agitatedly, shaking out her clothes. "Where's my——"

"Didn't have brains enough to ring for the porter?" he snorted.

"I looked for a bell——Oh, I——" still shak-

ing out her clothes, she held up a solitary chiffon stocking. "How AWFUL—a stocking and my pink silk slip! I left them—in that man's room!"

"You did, eh?" he exploded. "That all? What else did you do?"

"I know the number—'142'. Oh, you MUST get them! Can't you——"

"Butt into a man's room this time of night and ask for my wife's stocking? I DON'T think!"

"No, not tonight—in the morning."

"Roust him out at six o'clock? Nothing doing! But I'd like to see that bird's face when he finds your frills in his room. Any guess will be wrong! No Hungarian mind could follow your fool stunts."

"But I MUST have my slip—the only one I brought. You made me leave everything in Vienna. And you know how cold it'll be in that plane—we almost froze flying over!"

"Well, if you park your clothes in another man's room—it's not up to me to retrieve 'em! Now get to bed there. I want to see you settled. No more skylarking tonight! And hereafter, if a room number's too great a strain on your pin-headed mentality—write it on a tag and hang it 'round your neck!"

Warren's Penchant for Ham and Eggs Imperils Their Departure From Budapest

The early-morning haze veiled the Danube and shrouded the spires and domes of the still-slumbering city.

The lights of streets and bridges blurred wanly in the paling dawn.

From their balcony Helen gazed down the misty river. Beyond that fourth bridge, on the Buda side, were the anchored hydroplanes. She had seen them yesterday when they taxied over for their reservations.

"How does it look out there? Clear?" Warren, shrugging into his vest, came to the window. "Good day to fly?"

"Too early to tell," stepping back into the great, dim room. "But it's wonderful in this gray light. Oh, I almost wish we couldn't go this morning! I love Budapest—I'd love to stay another day."

"Well, I wouldn't! Loafed here three days—that's enough!" taking his watch and letter of credit from under his pillow. "These bags ready?"

"Yes, you can lock that one."

"Hold on, what're you cramming in there?"

"Just the guide-book—and those menus and postcards."

"Now these bags were full weight when we flew

over. Thirty pounds the limit on all these planes. Can't take back the stuff you bought here—and that junk, too!"

"Then I'll carry it," making a hasty package of her souvenirs.

"Well, if you're going to fool around—I'll go on down and see what I can gun up for breakfast."

"No, I'm ready," strapping the camera. "Oh, the maid—I wonder if she's on?"

"We'll leave it for her. She'll get it," he threw some Hungarian notes on the table. "Mighty decent at this hotel—not hangin' around for tips. Come on now, got everything? The porter'll bring down the bags."

The elevators not yet running, they walked down the wide central stairway.

In the great dimly lit rotunda, two women were washing the marble floor.

"Day porter's not on yet," growled Warren. "Can't make that night man understand a thing. Let's have a look in the dining-room."

But the lofty glass-domed restaurant was in its 6 a. m. dishevelment. Chairs on tables, scrub-pails, mops.

"Where can we get breakfast?" demanded Warren of the solitary shirt-sleeved waiter. "Breakfast! Food! Grub! Eats!"

In sonorous Hungarian he waved them through a hallway to the left.

"Where's he shooing us? I thought this led outside."

"Oh, dear, it does!" as they came out on the terrace café, where a gardener was watering the flower boxes. "Here's where they serve their early breakfast."

"Don't see much signs of it!"

"Yes, there're some tables set up. Oh, don't you love it out here?"

As they settled at a table that boasted a yellow-striped cloth, a waiter, struggling into his coat, hurried out.

"Coffee, rolls, and eggs!" brisked Warren. "And hustle it along."

An eager nod confirmed coffee and rolls, but at "eggs" he looked blank.

Warren's hasty oval, sketched on the back of an envelope, proved unenlightening. But a few more pencil strokes presented an illuminating nest.

"Hold on! If that works so well, we'll try for a little bacon. I'm a bum artist—but this ought to suggest a porker."

It did. Again the waiter beamed his understanding.

"Not a bad idea when you can't chatter their lingo. Cinch to order vegetables! Beans, peas in pod—asparagus—or would we get celery on that? Potatoes—easy. But how could you draw 'em mashed?"

"Dear, you shouldn't have ordered that bacon! It's twenty after six now—and that plane starts at half-past seven."

"Get there in ten minutes—just across the river. How's that for cauliflower? Punk, eh? Might hand us an artichoke—or a cabbage!"

At any other time Helen would have welcomed this as a pleasing diversion from his usual before-breakfast grouch. But now—if they should miss that plane?

"What's wrong with this picture? Think we could get a chicken on that? And how 'bout these for lamb chops?"

"Dear, it's half-past! Can't you do something to hurry him?"

"We'll always nail a lobster if I flash that!" still intent on his sketches. "Hereafter, when the sign language fails—I'll say it with pictures!"

"Oh, you're missing this wonderful view! Look, that haze on the river—and the Palace!" gazing across to Buda. "I said all along it was a dream city."

"Now tune off on that mushy dream stuff! Been pulling that slush ever since we got here. Wonder if that Johnnie did understand me? Yes, here he comes."

But he brought only the coffee. A curious earthen pot.

Following him came the pastry woman—the inevitable café vendor.

"Great guns, do they eat this for breakfast, too?" scowling at the heaping tray she offered for their selection.

"Dear, it's not all pastry—here're some rolls.

They're sweet—but I'm afraid it's all we'll get," forking off two for him and one for herself.

The pastry woman, collecting direct as was the custom, mumbled her thanks when Warren waved back the change.

"Don't wait for the bacon and eggs," urged Helen. "We won't have time!"

"We'll TAKE time! Now I sink a good breakfast before I start on that air trip."

A hostile interval before the waiter appeared with a silver-domed platter.

"HAM!" exploded Warren, when the cover was raised. "I ordered bacon!"

"How could he tell? You drew a pig—you didn't mark what part. But, look," holding out her wrist watch, "you won't have time to eat that."

"Think I'll pass up this?" spooning on his plate two of the golden-yolked eggs. "If we're not there on the minute—they'll wait for us."

"Why, they have to fly on schedule, don't they?"

"Darn good ham. Picture worked all right, at that. Where's that pastry jane? These measly little rolls—why didn't you nail enough of them?"

"Warren, they MUST fly on time! They can't —Oh, here's the day clerk!"

"Good morning," approaching their table. "Are you flying to Vienna on that seven-thirty plane, sir? You have very little time."

"Oh, they'll give us some leeway," shrugged Warren. "Only take four passengers. Make out my bill and order a taxi."

"That's the trouble, sir. Very hard to get a cab this early."

"The devil it is! Why, I told you yesterday we were going on this plane."

"Yes, sir, but you left no order for a cab. I'll try to get one."

"Oh, I know we'll miss it!" despaired Helen as he hurried off.

"We'll NOT miss it! Sit down there and finish your breakfast. Can't take this trip on an empty stomach."

But with only a gulp at her coffee, Helen dashed back into the office. The clerk, out on the steps, was whistling for a cab.

Tensely she gazed down the deserted street until a taxi turned the corner.

Then, darting back for Warren, she met him coming through the corridor.

"Got that bill ready?" digging into his wallet. "Our bags down?"

At last in the taxi, the driver instructed by the porter, and they were speeding along the river.

"Plenty of time," Warren glanced at his watch. "Hello, a market along here."

Carts of fruits and vegetables—green and crimson. Baskets of flowers. Shawl-headed women arranging their wares in barrows and stalls.

On past the picturesque old-world market, and they were crossing the bridge.

"There're the hydroplanes!" eagered Helen, peering down the river.

Like huge sea-gulls the winged crafts rested on the water. Three, covered with canvas hoods, were anchored in the dock. One was ready to fly!

"Look, two men getting in—and the pilot!" clutching his arm.

"Here, don't throw a fit! We'll make it. Take 'em half an hour to get started."

"Oh, these carts!" frantically. "Can't he drive around them?"

Off the bridge at last, they plunged ahead of the lumbering market carts.

"They're taking up the plank!" anguished Helen.

"By George, that's right!"

"Oh, I KNEW we'd miss it! I told you——"

"Now none of that!" he snarled, glaring at the seaplane now skimming over the water. "Thought you were so damned keen on staying another day?"

"I was—if it were too foggy to fly. But not this way—and lose our passage."

"Huh, won't break us! Only fourteen dollars."

A gesturing commotion as the crowd on the platform now sighted the taxi with the belated passengers.

Running to the river's edge, one of them blew an ear-splitting whistle.

"Trying to call them back!" thrilled Helen. "Oh, can he make them hear?"

"Doubt it!" Warren sprang out.

Another shrieking blast as the men rushed their bags to the Customs shed.

Had the pilot heard? The speed of the plane was slackening.

"It's turning! Coming back! He caught them just in time."

"Mighty decent of him. Guess that's worth a hundred thousand," counting some bills from his wallet.

"Give him fifty thousand—and the pilot fifty," economized Helen.

"No, we don't. They get a hundred each. Not much over a dollar. Want to get rid of this Hungarian kale, anyway."

None of the men could speak English but Warren's generous tip compensated for their tardiness.

Their tickets and passports examined, the suitcases weighed, and they were hurried down the steps just as the hydroplane churned up to the platform.

The pilot looked disgruntled, but the two passengers nodded good-naturedly.

"Well, that was darned lucky!" grinned Warren, as their bags were stowed in the plane. "Caught 'em just in time. Couldn't whistle 'em down once they were in the air."

"But it was SO unnecessary!" flared Helen. "We might just as well have been on time! If you hadn't ordered that bacon——"

"Never mind 'bout that bacon!" hustling her up the plank. "Caught the plane, didn't we? What more d'you want? I said we'd make it—and we DID! What're you kickin' for—just to keep in trainin'? Now settle back there—you got to stay put on these sky-pins!"

Looping-the-Loop Over the Danube in a Hazardous Hydroplane Flight

Their second air trip!

Without a tremor of apprehension, Helen settled back for their return flight.

In thrilled anticipation of another two hours above the clouds, she watched the plane skim along the Danube, gathering speed for the ascent.

Saturday they had aëroplaned over from Vienna. Three enchanted days in Budapest and now—hydroplaning back!

Like a great sea gull the winged craft swept along the river towards the bridges—gray spectral arches in this early-morning mist.

Were they to fly over them? Or not take to the air until well beyond?

The pilot was now signaling over his shoulder. The cue for them to lean forward—to make easier the ascent. That was why Warren and the stout Hungarian had been seated in front.

A jolt, a lurch! A deafening roar of the engine as they rose from the water.

Now in the air, the first bridge loomed menacingly ahead.

They were flying low—the bridge perilously near! Could they clear it?

Helen caught her breath and gripped the back of Warren's seat. A swift glance at the man beside

her—a thin, nervous Italian. His crouching posture and evident alarm grotesqued the dignity of his *pince-nez* and pointed beard.

But, just as the crash seemed inevitable, the plane shot upward—clearing the bridge.

The needed elevation now attained, they all four sank back into their seats, the Italian mopping his forehead with a lavender handkerchief.

"Dear, wasn't that awfully close?" she shouted into Warren's ear.

"Looked so," he shrugged. "But guess this Johnnie knows his job."

On up the river, beyond the market, past the great hotels along the Quai. Now they were soaring over the bridge that leads to the Royal Palace on the Buda side. How bleak and deserted that great walled castle in this early-morning haze!

Over the Margitsziget, that Arcadian island in the Danube between Buda and Pest—then on past the last bridge.

Their farewell glimpse of Budapest! It would soon only be a memory. Wistfully Helen looked back at the mist-veiled domes.

At every lurch, the man beside her clutched the arms of his seat. Plainly his first air trip!

With conscious superiority Helen saw him appraise her suitcase—labeled evidence of their previous flight.

Those extra labels she had asked for? A flurried search in her handbag. Yes, she had them—for the trunks left in Vienna.

The clouds that had shrouded the sunrise were now dispersing—leaving a flushed, radiant sky.

And the river below, a zigzag blue ribbon through patches of green and brown.

As a hydroplane could land only on water, for safety they must keep over the Danube all the way to Vienna. An Elysian voyage!

The pilot's aide gave an added sense of security. Their flight over had been with a lone pilot.

This was also a four-passenger plane, but the appointments more luxurious. Gray cloth upholstery and gray silk curtains, edged with blue beads. The beads—a frivolous touch in this chariot of the sky.

In the glass-enclosed cabin they were comfortably protected from the furious wind that knifed the goggled, ear-capped pilot and his aide.

The Hungarian was now studying a map, locating the villages.

From so great a height they all looked the same. A cluster of red-roofed, toy houses with a steepled church and a white-dotted graveyard.

Those cemeteries rarely visible from train or boat—yet from a plane, the conspicuous note of every town.

Seven villages could now be seen along the valley. And in each—that ominous, white-dotted plot.

Those crawling atoms—how futile seemed their lives! A few troubled years that led only to another dot in their churchyard.

The futility of all life! The triviality of all worries. How fleeting—how inconsequential!

These flights should give one a broader vision. As always, under any mental stimulus, Helen was spurred to emotional resolutions.

She would not worry over little things. All that really mattered was character. She would strive to be less petty, less narrow, more generous.

What was that she had read the other day?

"What we gave, we have. What we spent, we had. What we saved, we never had."

That antique brooch bought in Budapest. She had so much—these trips abroad with Warren. She would give that to her Cousin Martha, who had so little.

A sudden mist obliterated sky and earth. They had plunged into a cloud!

Were they going slower? Or was the dense vapor muffling the engine's roar?

How could the pilot steer in this blinding fog? Nothing to guide him!

With trembling hands the Italian opened a bag at his feet. A glimpse of tortoise-shell fittings, as he took out a sustaining flask.

As suddenly as they had plunged into the clouds, they now emerged above them. Again the blue sky! Again the sunlight sparkled on the varnished wings, with their cryptic letters—"H—M A C A".

But now they were in another world—above the clouds!

A strange white world, like a vision of the polar

region. The vast cloud-ocean below might be a snow-covered landscape.

"Look down there!" Warren shouted back. "Great sight!"

Then she saw it—that weird phenomena!

Below, on the white cloud-ocean, a dark phantom plane! Their shadow!

An uncanny apparition chasing after them. Skipping along the foamy clouds.

Then, to enhance the magic of this etheric world, their pursuing shadow was encircled by a rainbow. A complete iris, lying flat below them on the white-frothed sea! A glorious-hued ring around their impish specter.

The rainbow, their shadow, and this isolated, snow-carpeted world!

"Hand me the camera!" boomed Warren. "Want to try for that shadow."

Lowering the window beside him, he flung off his hat and leaned far out.

"Oh, not any more!" shrilled Helen, when he prepared for the third exposure. "I want some of the plane—with me standing by it!"

"Going to nail that shadow! Never get another chance at a sight like that."

But the next second—again in the enveloping vapor!

Were they sinking through the cloud-sea—or was it lashing up to submerge them?

Soon they could see the earth. How strange after that celestial world!

On and on they flew, following the river far below. At times across great wooded bends and peninsulas cutting off miles of the Danube's winding course.

The Hungarian was now calling attention to a miniature boat in the river.

"Boat for Vienna," explained Warren, handing back the camera. "Left Budapest last night—doesn't get in till six. We'll 'light there in forty minutes."

The midget boat seemed barely to move in the now gray-green stream.

That sun-glinted thread along the bank—a railway! A creeping toy train.

Only forty minutes now! Helen wished it were hours. Charioting through the sky! Life offered nothing more exhilarating.

But her enthusiasm was not shared by the Italian beside her. Anxious glances at his watch betrayed his eagerness to land. Was it fear or dizziness?

Great heights always made her dizzy—but not these air trips. Perhaps because they were detached from the earth. Not peering down from a building.

"See that smoke?" Warren sighted a smudge on the horizon. "Must be Vienna."

And then, without warning, without even a preparatory jolt—came a swift, terrifying dive. Downward, straight down! A sickening drop!

Helen's scream was lost in the roar.

Then a steadying lurch! Her held breath relaxed, as they again shot upward.

What did it mean? Something wrong with the engine?

Now, as they sped smoothly along, the wind-reddened pilot turned to grin back at them—waving at something ahead.

Another plane flying by! Suddenly it dropped. A sheer dip—then up again!

So, the aerial gymnastics had been merely a passing greeting! The planes signaling each other. A loop-the-loop salutation!

The nerve-shattered Italian now fairly spluttered. Leaning forward, he shouted his indignation to the Hungarian in front.

Nearing Vienna! Cathedral spires now pierced the smoke-screened horizon.

They were flying lower. The landscape heaving upward!

Was that the dock ahead? Much swifter this descent than their circling landing at Budapest. Was it easier to alight on the water?

Slanting straight down to the river now. Would they plunge into it?

Nearer—nearer. Hardly a splash when they struck the water! Now they were skimming along with slackening speed.

At the dock, three men stood ready to help them land.

The door unlocked, Warren scrambled out and swung Helen to the platform.

The irate Italian started to berate the pilot, who only laughed and shrugged.

"Bawlin' him out for that loop-the-loop stunt," grinned Warren.

"Dear, he was so nervous all the way—I felt sorry for him," shaking out her traveling coat. "In that awful plunge, he gripped my arm—it's still sore."

"Well, you're a darn good sport, Kitten. When I looked back after that dive—you hadn't turned a hair. That poor shrimp was white as his collar."

"Oh, I loved it! I wasn't a bit afraid," living up to his praise, since he had not heard her scream.

"Can't say I was keen 'bout it. Thought we were checkin' out! Next time we go on a sky-flivver, I'll tip off the chauff to cut the wig-wagging. No dipping-the-dips when he sights another bus. He can say 'Howdy' with a little less shock to my innards!"

Then as he strode ahead up the rough board steps to the passport office:

"Here's where we hustle, got to get our mugs passed! Guess that's the car to take us in. Where we goin' for lunch? Bristol? Imperial? What's that? Too early? Not for me! After that jolting down, my Little Mary wants food—and wants it darn quick! Come on now, leg it lively!"

Helen's Avidity for Old-World Bargains Leads to an Expensive Adventure

Snuff-boxes, age-yellowed laces, old-world jewelry, silver, china—the ever-alluring clutter of an *Antiquitaten* window.

"Dear, just a second!" pleaded Helen. "That old garnet brooch—it's exactly like my necklace."

Warren, who had strode on ahead, turned back for a grudging glance.

"They won't sell it separate," for the coveted brooch reposed in a velvet case with earrings, chain, and bracelet.

"They might; I'll ask—it won't take a minute."

Unmindful of his scowling impatience, she darted in to the dim, treasure-jumbled shop.

The shopman, who could speak a little English, protested he could not sell the brooch alone. But the set was very reasonable—only three million kronen.

About forty-five dollars. And she had a necklace—a much finer one.

Murmuring her regret, Helen turned to the door. A man, whom she had thought a customer, followed her out.

"Pardon," in excellent English. "If you are interested in old jewelry, my wife has some family

pieces we are forced to sell," taking a card from his pocket.

"I'm sorry, but we're leaving Vienna tonight," explained Helen.

Suavely persistent, he urged that it was but a little way to his flat. They could go now. There were many fine heirlooms—jewelry, laces, silver.

Helen hesitated, her feminine bargain instinct avidly alert. To buy at first hand—a rare opportunity! What old-world treasures might she not discover?

"Nothing doing!" was Warren's squelching verdict, when she consulted him. "We'll not spend our last day chasin' junk. You got enough this trip."

"But you wanted something else for Carrie," inspirationally. "We might find something wonderful. He says they've a lot of lace—and she's crazy about old lace."

"How far?" always susceptible to the bait of something for his sister.

"Oh, it can't be far," eagerly. "He said——"

"Only ten minutes in a cab, sir." The man, hovering near, now approached.

Athrill at the prospect of an adventurous treasure-hunt, Helen sprang into the taxi he had hailed. Warren followed, grumblingly reluctant.

The address given, their self-appointed guide took the drop seat and plunged into a laudatory account of his wife's heirlooms.

"——and now all must be sacrificed before we can return to Paris."

"Oh, you're not Viennese?" ventured Helen.

"No, no, Madame, my wife was born in Paris—and I, in Alsace."

This information contributed to Helen's enjoyment of prospective bargains. The Viennese were so kindly and so poor. She shrank from profiting by their need.

Down the Graben, past St. Stephens, and on through a street of ivied walls.

The ten minutes lengthened to twenty before they finally drew up in an inauspicious neighborhood of small shops.

While Warren paid for the cab Helen viewed the bakery before which they had stopped. A typical Viennese *patisserie*, the window gorged with ornate pastry.

Did they live above? She had expected a more pretentious address.

"I hope you do not mind the stairs," he ushered them into a dingy hallway.

"Oh, not at all," Helen politely assured him.

The halls were wide but bare and shabby. One flight, two, three——

"Where we goin'?" demanded Warren. "To the roof?"

"Just two more flights, sir," he encouraged.

At the skylighted top floor, he opened the first door.

Helen's hopes, that had slumped with their ascent, now soared again. A spacious apartment, luxuriously furnished.

The woman, plainly French, seemed not surprised at their intrusion.

The place exuded antiques. Every table, chest, and cabinet littered with curios.

"Ah, my grandmother—she loved beautiful things! She collected—many years. What a pity—we must sell!"

Her husband, unlocking a cabinet, took out a drawer of jewelry.

Cameos, garnets, amethysts, amber, turquoise—all in quaint old settings.

"Ah, something for you—very fine," taking a cameo necklace from its case. "Twenty cameos—all different. Will you see?" offering a magnifying glass.

"It's very lovely, but, I'm afraid, too expensive for me," evaded Helen.

"Expensive? Nothing here expensive. We must sell all—quickly! For that? In your money—only six hundred dollars. It is nothing!"

Helen's polite murmur concealed her amazement at the exorbitant price.

A tortoise-shell bracelet, an aquamarine pendant, and a carbuncle brooch were proportionately expensive. Double what the average antique shop would ask.

"You spoke of some laces?" ventured Helen, as the jewelry seemed hopeless.

"You will see the laces before you decide? Ah, Monsieur is interested in books?"

"Not in these plugs," grunted Warren, scanning a bookcase.

"Perhaps in prints? Ah, I will show you some very fine old prints."

"You will see my laces?" cajoled the woman. "Please! In my room."

While Warren viewed the prints Helen was ushered into the bedroom.

The white-and-gold luxury of a French-farce boudoir! The silk-draped bed, white fur rugs, and a silver-littered dressing-table. Modern extravagances that were not heirlooms. Nothing suggestive of reduced circumstances or the need to sell.

The laces were in a lacquered chest. An enticing assortment.

"Just an inexpensive collar or handkerchief for a present," suggested Helen.

But the prices were equally excessive. A small point collar, not the finest, thirty-five dollars. A handkerchief, thirty. A piece of old blond lace, twenty.

How could they escape? The woman was even more persistent than her husband.

"You do not think this cheap?" she shrilled. "That handkerchief for only thirty dollars? You Americans have so much. To you—that is nothing!"

"It's more than I care to pay for a handkerchief," resented Helen.

"Wait, I show you other things," opening a chest of old brocades and velvets.

Gloatingly Helen took up a bit of crimson velvet, worn almost to the nap.

"Ah, yes, the old Venetian! I see you know. That you may have very cheap."

"Make the price in kronens," laughed Helen. "Not dollars."

"Ah, you will have in kronens?" with a disdainful shrug. "Only a million nine hundred thousand."

Mentally Helen computed it in dollars. About twenty-eight.

"You not call that cheap?" again the shrill of animosity. "How much you give?"

"It's not a half yard. I bought a larger piece in Florence for ten dollars."

"Old Venetian velvet? Impossible! But I will make this in your money—twenty-two dollars. No? Then you only come to look—you not want to buy!"

"I'm afraid not, at your prices. I'm sorry to have troubled you."

Flushed and indignant Helen turned back to the front room, where the man, with aggressive insistency, was still trying to sell Warren some prints.

"Ah, *monsieur*, we must sell at any price! Take the three for fifty dollars!"

"I told you I didn't want them!" rasped Warren. "They're late restrikes."

"You found no laces to suit you?" hastily turning to Helen, with a telegraphic glance at his wife. "You would like to see the jewelry again?"

"No, thank you. I only wanted some very inexpensive things for presents."

"These make very nice presents," taking a papier-mâché snuff box from a cabinet. "No? Then, this crystal scent bottle—only fifteen dollars. You think that is high? Why, it is nothing—it——"

"Now see here, we're not goin' to be bullied into buying anything!" exploded Warren. "You dragged us up here. I don't know the other stuff, but I know a little 'bout prints—get any of these for half the price at a good dealer's."

The woman, with a shrug and sneer, was now shrilling something in French. Warren caught the reference to "cheap Americans."

"Well, we're not fallin' for your sucker prices! Proof impression!" taking up one of the prints. "A rotten reproduction—and you know it!"

"Sh—sh, dear," restrained Helen. "Come, let's go."

A crash! A shivery crash!

Jerking his hat from the bric-à-brac cluttered table, Warren had swept a Bohemian glass decanter to the floor.

A panicky moment! A wave of crimson scorched Helen's face.

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" from the woman.

"All right, what's the damage?" Grimly, Warren drew out his wallet. "How much?"

The excited couple consulted in voluble French.

"You see what it was—a very fine——"

"Now never mind the pedigree—how much?"

"It is most unfortunate. The price was forty

dollars—but an accident—you need pay only thirty."

"That's outrageous," whispered Helen. "It wasn't worth ten!"

"Thirty dollars, sir. That's just what it cost me."

"Cost you, eh? Slipped up that time! How 'bout your grandmother's heirlooms? I spotted this for dealers' stuff. A plant for gullible Americans. Well, you didn't pull it off this time. Now you put those pieces in your pocket and come with me. I'll get a valuation from an honest Viennese dealer."

At this another excited, gestured conference.

"My wife says since it's an accident—we'll take twenty."

"I'll give you ten! You'll take that—or go with me and have it valued."

After another parley, the woman flounced angrily into the next room, leaving her husband to make the surly acceptance.

"There you are, good American dollars!" throwing the bills on the table. "Next time you drag an American up here—be sure he's the sucker type."

Another moment and they were out in the hall—the door slammed after them.

Down the steps—the four long flights. In grim, forbidding silence Warren stumped on ahead.

It was not until he had hailed a cab, and they

were whirling back to the Bristol, that he heeded Helen's fluttered indignation.

"Heirlooms—their grandmother!" he snorted. "Hold-up artists—pretty slick team. Now never mind the ten spot! We got out of there cheap. Hereafter you buy your junk in reliable shops. Don't try to pull off bargains by digging around these private joints. They're all plants fixed up to trim suckers. But that bird got a couple of ten-minute eggs—when he picked US!"

The "Russian Comedians" Feature Flapjacks Plus Caviar and Sour Cream

"How 'bout that Russian joint?" brisked Warren as they swung along the Rue Royale in the roseate before-dinner hour.

"Oh, you have to reserve a table days ahead," discouraged Helen. "And we couldn't go tonight, anyway."

"Why not?" belligerently.

"We're not dressed—they wouldn't let us in."

"Huh, I'll take a chance on that! Get in any place in Paris—if you got the coin. Go in your pajamas—if you cough up enough."

"But, dear, they say it's crowded every night—you have to reserve ahead."

"Well, we do mighty little reserving—and we usually get what we want. Come on, hop in there!" hailing a taxi.

With reckless speed they were whirled through the congested streets. All Paris, in honking cabs, was hurrying to dine.

"Dear, if we can't get in—let's go over to the Latin Quarter, some little place," economically. " 'Henriette's'—we haven't been there this trip."

"Nothing doing, not on the cheap tonight! Only two more days in Paris—going to hit it up! Here we are now."

Comédiens Russes, was the black-and-orange sign over a low doorway.

Closely drawn orange curtains enticingly shrouded the mysteries within.

"Looks like a dive," grinned Warren. "Hope it's a lively one."

In the tiny vestibule, a uniformed attendant guarded the inner sanctum.

"You have reservations, Monsieur?" taking Warren's hat and stick.

"I have not," curtly. "But I want a table—and a good one."

"I knew they wouldn't let us in," whispered Helen, as the attendant disappeared to consult the potentates within. "Did you see the look he gave you?"

"X-raying my wallet! That Comedian's French. Don't worry, they'll not let any easy mark Americans get away."

Here the draperies parted and a sleek head waiter appeared.

"Ah, good evening, Monsieur. You have no reservations?"

"No," crisply. "If you can't take care of us, we'll try the next joint."

"A moment, Monsieur. I'll see what we can do."

Drawing back the heavy curtains, he stood aside for them to enter.

Shaded lights, riotous colors, draped walls and ceiling, and the exotic incense contributed to the bizarre effect of the long, high room.

The crimson velvet wall-benches back of the long tables left the narrow floor space for the cabaret.

Still early, the place was empty, except for a champagne party of four.

"Ah, you are fortunate, Monsieur," after a hurried confab with another waiter. "There has just been a cancellation."

Settled on the wall-bench, Warren leaned back with an exultant chuckle.

"How 'bout it? Knew he'd come across. A cancellation—that's old stuff!"

"The Russian dishes are in red, Monsieur," now placing before them a flamboyant menu. "I can recommend that fresh caviar. A shipment came this morning."

"What is this *Borstch?*" asked Helen with a restraining nudge, for the *Caviar Frais* was forty francs.

"*Borstch, Madame,* is cabbage soup and sour cream."

"Cabbage soup and sour cream?" grimaced Warren. "Not for me."

"*Blinis!* Oh! I've heard of that," eagered Helen before the waiter could propose another expensive dish. "Dear, let's try it."

"All right, we'll take a chance. Trot it along. No, I'll order the rest later."

"The wine, Monsieur," producing the list, suggestively opened at champagnes.

"How 'bout that number sixteen? Dry? Eighteen's better? A quart."

"Dear, you could've ordered a cheaper brand! Number two or three."

"Now see here, he came across with a good table. We got to loosen up."

"But these prices are awful——"

"Pretty stiff. Russian Comedians! Well, no comedian priced that card—rang in a bandit for that job."

Then again taking up the dinner menu:

"These prices aren't so bad. It's only on the wine they soak you. What's that *Blinis*, anyway? Why were you so keen on that?"

"I don't know what it is. But it's only ten francs —everything else is more."

"Well, of all the nickel-nursers! Wonder you didn't spot chili sauce—cheaper still."

"Dear, look at this draped ceiling," to divert him. "These colored lanterns are rather good. I suppose all the decorations are Russian."

"Ought to be somethin' Russian 'round here. These waiters are French enough. Hello, lamp that jane—nifty get-up!"

Vivid black-and-red! Sleek, black hair, slinky-trained black satin, red tulle scarf, huge, red ostrich fan, red Spanish comb, and long red gloves.

"Dear, she's alone! Do they allow women here alone? Oh, look—Americans!"

"Doing Paris—first trip," rated Warren as the family party was seated.

The man, bald and prosperous, his hulky wife,

ill at ease in her new and unbecoming French gown, their collegiate son, and pretty flapper daughter.

"Don't know the ropes. They'll get trimmed, all right," predicted Warren, as the hovering head waiter suggested the more expensive dishes.

"You're the only man not dressed," Helen scanned the rapidly filling tables.

"We travel fast. Can't doll up every night. Now we'll see what you drew."

"Let's guess!" eagerly, as their waiter rolled up a service table with a covered dish. "I'll say fish with some wonderful sauce. Quick, what do you think?"

"I think we're lucky if we——Holy Smoke!"

Helen gasped. The cover lifted displayed—a neat stack of griddle cakes!

"Flapjacks!" sputtered Warren. "Plain one-arm lunch flapjacks!"

With rapt intentness the waiter divided the pile of six pancakes—three on each plate. Then, spooning from a great silver bowl, he proceeded to anoint them.

"What's he latherin' on? Shavin' soap?" grunted Warren.

"Sour cream! They put it on everything—like Italians do cheese. But you wouldn't think on pancakes—Oh, dear, what's he putting on now? Not caviar?"

From an ice-packed stone jar he scooped out a generous spoonful of caviar—to top the sour-creamed griddle cakes!

"Sh—sh, now don't explode," whispered Helen. "Wait till you try it."

Warren fairly glowered as the astounding mixture was placed before them.

"Delicious!" was Helen's joyous verdict. "You never tasted anything like it."

"Hope not," grimly. "And I never want to!"

"Dear, you'll love it!" with increased enthusiasm. "Just try it!"

Scowlingly reluctant, he forked gingerly into his portion.

"Not bad." Then after the third forkful, "You're all right, Kitten. Picked a winner! Blinis! Now remember that's Russian for 'brown-the-wheats'!"

"Oh, don't eat so fast. Take time and enjoy it —it's perfectly wonderful!"

"See here, why not spring this at home? A knockout when we have the Stevens."

"Oh, we couldn't get sour cream like this. They make it special."

"Hello! What now?" as all the lights flashed out.

Then through the darkness glowed other lights, deeply shaded—mauve, green, orange.

A silencing "sh-sh," as the woman in black-and-red arose from her table.

In a curiously deep strident voice she lunged an impassioned French song. Vigorously plying the red fan, she cavorted in the narrow floor space.

"Bum voice—but plenty of pep and assurance," as the lights went up.

"Why, where're your cakes?" amazed Helen. "Nobody ate while she sang."

"I did!" complacently viewing his empty plate. "Think I was going to let those sinkers get cold? Now here's the menu. You did pretty well on that blind draw. Stick a pin in it—and see what else we get."

Warren's gastronomic geniality progressed with the dinner.

Ignoring Helen's restraining nudges, he ordered with reckless extravagance.

At intervals the lowered lights introduced the cabaret turns. Excepting the woman in black-and-red, who seemed a fixture, the artists did not reappear.

"Dear, how can they afford so many?" as they applauded the sixth turn.

"They're on a circuit. Do their stunts at a dozen places every night."

"That man with the accordion was rather good—but the others were very ordinary. That girl who danced—did you notice how soiled her gown was?"

"Wasn't enough of it to notice. Huh, look at that big-front getaway! Tipping everybody in sight."

After a hurried but pretentious dinner, the American party was making a royal exit. Even the orchestra shared in the lavish dispensation of *francs*.

"They only shell out like that on the first trip," shrugged Warren.

"Did you enjoy the *Poularde Russe,* Monsieur?" removing their plates.

"No kick on that. Got a good chef here. Now what's that burning dessert you served over there?"

"*Blintchikis Souvoroff,*" pointing to the red-lettered item under "Entremets."

"All right, two on that! We're taking chances tonight."

Again the serving table was rolled up. On an alcohol burner was placed a metal cup. Into this, two small glasses of amber liquor from a curious-shaped Russian-labeled bottle.

Stirred with a glass spoon, the heating cordial soon burst into flames.

Then quickly the fiery fluid was poured over the two dishes of diced fruit.

"This'll knock your eye out," Warren spooned into his still-flaming portion.

"Nuts in it—and marrons! And what're these green things? Dear, it's wonderful! But an awful thing to eat after all that rich——"

"Now don't start on that! Long time 'fore you'll have a shot at a concoction like this—now enjoy it. What if they could serve these conflagrations on Broadway at ninety cents per? Have 'em standing in line to the Battery."

"Alligator pear, too!" Helen was still exploring the alluring mixture. "And, dear, what's this *liqueur? Kirsch* or *Kümmel?*"

"More like *Vodka.* Strong, all right! Glad you came? If I'd listened to your broadcasting 'bout not being dressed—we'd have missed some darn good grub. Those *de luxe* flapjacks and this three-alarm dessert!"

"But I wonder how we'll feel tomorrow? They're rather awful combinations."

"Well, this's no health-food spree! If you're on a diet, you'd side-step this joint. *Blinis, Borstch, Blintchikis*—that's a great line to stoke up on! But guess our tum-tums can stand it. Anyway, it's too good to pass up. Here, Gaston!" flagging the waiter. "Cook me up another of those firework super-sundaes!"

Helen's Last-Minute Change of Costume Imperils Their Channel Crossing

"Dear, those Channel boats are always filthy," Helen paused in her packing. "Won't my old blue suit be good enough?"

"Any ink in your pen?" Warren was writing the baggage tags.

"Yes, there on the table—with those postcards. Dear, DO look!" holding up the blue suit. "I'm going to have it cleaned in London—but is it good enough for this trip?"

"Anything's good enough," not troubling to glance up. "That's a bum pen! Where's a blotter?"

"You'll have to let it dry. Wouldn't you think they'd have a desk in this room? Eighty francs a day—and on the court, too."

"We're checkin' out now—why start kickin'? Always up against it in Paris. Six," counting the tags he had written. "That enough?"

"Yes, two trunks and four bags. Dear, they won't charge on this if it's open, will they?" cutting the white kid from an expensive bottle of perfume.

"Won't be much, if they do. You waste more time worryin' over a few dollars duty. Where's

that box of cigars? Now, no smuggling! Put it on top where they can see it. Perfume and tobacco —that's all the English hold you up for. Guess we can pay on those."

"These lovely French boxes! And I always have to leave them," taking some handkerchiefs from a gay Bon-Marché box. "They'd be wonderful for presents."

"Huh, you fill 'em with basement bargains bought at home," he scoffed. "Now what?" tying on the last tag.

"That's all, unless you'll write a postcard to Aunt Emily. I haven't written since we were in Budapest. Tell her we've had a wonderful week in Paris, that we're leaving for London in a few hours, and——"

"Nothing doing! Write your own cards—do your own pen-pushing! I'm going down to pay the bill. And I'll dust 'round to that glove shop—want a pair of those doeskins for Lawrence."

"Why, we got him that Malacca cane—and that expensive bag for Carrie! You don't have to get them anything more——"

But Warren had slammed out with an irate bang. Presents for his family always incited hostilities. Every trip his selections were more extravagant.

For the next half hour, Helen packed with experienced speed. She must finish in time to write those postcards. Use up those French stamps.

Her new dress! Gloatingly she took it from the box. Blonde chiffon with satiny knots of powder-

blue. An exultant thrill at her slimness that could stand those triple flounces.

Better fold it flat on top of Warren's shirts. Crush less there than in her wardrobe trunk.

The last bag packed. Every drawer searched to see that nothing was left.

Now all ready for the dreaded Channel trip, Helen started on the postcards.

With her accustomed economy, she scribbled the same message on them all.

"Ready?" Warren swung in. "Here're those gloves. Where'll I put 'em?"

"In that suitcase—the trunks are locked," noting the bulky envelope proclaimed several pairs.

"Let's see what kind of a trip we're in for." Taking from his pocket an English daily, he turned to the "Channel Weather" report.

"We never had a good crossing yet," pessimistically, addressing the last card.

"By George, this doesn't look cheering! 'High east winds. Heavy mist. Probably rain.' "

"I'm glad I'm wearing this old suit. Dear, what's Irene's number? 427? We'll stay on deck even if it does rain—I can't stand those stuffy cabins."

"Well, we're takin' the Calais crossing—only an hour on the Channel. Who you think's goin' with us? Met 'em yesterday—forgot to tell you. The Kelsos!"

"The KELSOS?" Her pen rolled inkily over Cousin Irene's card.

"Been here all week at the Crillon. Rotten luck we didn't know it. We'd have pulled off some great parties!"

"Here're the keys!" excitedly. "Open my trunk —quick!"

"Eh? What in blazes——" he spluttered.

"This old blue suit!" tearing it off. "You don't think I'll wear this—with the Kelsos?"

"What they got to do with it? You batty? Leave here in ten minutes."

"We don't leave until I get into a decent suit! Let her see me in this old thing? You knew it yesterday—and never told me. You always——"

"Here's the porter for the luggage now!" answering the knock.

"He'll just have to wait," unlocking the trunk, for Warren had made no effort to help her. "If you'd only told me!"

While he fumed and stormed, she dragged out her new *beige* suit.

"I don't care if we DO miss it! The tickets are good—all but the reservations. We can go tomorrow. Mrs. Kelso! You know how she dresses!"

A reminding knock from the porter, still waiting in the hall.

"*Une minute!*" shrilled Helen, kicking off her blue skirt. "If you want to help—put that in! Cram it in anyway—you can't hurt it. Oh, these old gloves! Where'd I put my new ones?" upsetting her neatly packed tray.

As, with muttered profanity, Warren finally

closed and locked the trunk, Helen called to the porter to enter.

"Gone!" Warren flung open the door.

Vainly he shouted down the hall. Then dashing back to the bedside 'phone, roared at the office to send a porter at once.

A hectic five minutes, and the same man returned. He could not speak English, but his exasperating shrug disclaimed his responsibility. Not his fault their trunks had not been ready.

"Well, hustle 'em down! Here," thrusting at him a ten-franc note. "Savvy that, don't you? Now make it snappy!"

His coat over his arm, Warren strode out with the two suitcases.

Flushed and flurried, but arrayed in the smart *beige* suit, Helen followed with the smaller bag.

Down in the lobby, the head porter rushed up with dismaying news. The hotel bus, with the other passengers for the Calais-Dover express, had gone.

"Sorry, *monsieur*, it left ten minutes ago. But you may make it in a taxi."

Another maddening delay as three cabs refused to take their trunks. The fourth responded with alacrity to Warren's bribe of an extra fifteen *francs*.

Through the Place Vendôme, on past the Opera, and down the Rue La Fayette. A reckless, breath-taking drive to the Gare du Nord.

The driver, instructed by the porter to make the train, exceeded even the usual dizzy Parisian speed.

"Oh!" gasped Helen, as they just missed crashing into another cab. "Oh, tell him—not quite so fast!"

"Now we're going to get that train—if we break our necks doin' it! Changin' your duds at the last minute!" he fumed. "Next time you pull a fool ——"

"If you'd only told me the Kelsos were going!" flamingly. "I asked you about that old suit. I even said——"

"Got plenty of good clothes, haven't you? Buy enough! Why the Sam Hill don't you wear 'em? Too blamed stingy? Every time we run into anybody—you set up a wail you're not dressed."

Then glowering at his watch,

"Never make it! Take ten minutes to get the trunks weighed."

"But those Channel trains never leave on time. Why, it's raining!" shrinking from the open window. "Dear, shut that—I don't want to get this suit wet."

"Serve you right if you get soaked! Now we're held up here! Rotten luck," scowling down the taxi-jammed street. "That settles it! Not a Chinaman's chance!"

At the great dingy station, the gates for the Calais train were closed.

"*N'est pas possible!*" shrugged the guard.

"Wait till I flash my roll," muttered Warren, digging into his pocket. "Now's the time to shell out."

In Paris nothing is impossible if the tips are sufficiently lavish. And Warren's dispersement of *francs* passed their baggage without being weighed, opened the gates, and swept them through.

Their trunks rushed on to the luggage car, two guards bundled them into a first-class carriage, just as the train pulled out.

"Well, we made it!" grunted Warren, piling their bags on the overhead rack.

"Dear, you needn't have given that last porter ten *francs*—five would've been plenty!" brushing a smudge from the immaculate *beige* skirt. "You tipped everybody in sight."

"You bet I did! That was the time to cough up. Wasn't goin' to be held over another day for a few *francs*. Wonder which compartment the Kelsos have? Guess I'll look 'em up."

As he started out, a train guard came through the corridor shouting:

"Monsieur Curtis! Monsieur Curtis of New York!"

The flimsy pink envelope of a French telegram!

What was it? Tensely Helen watched him tear it open. Who knew they would be on this train?

A snort from Warren as he scanned the message.

"That's a frost!" grimly, tossing it into her lap.

SORRY CANNOT CROSS WITH YOU STAYING UNTIL TOMORROW SEE YOU IN LONDON STOPPING AT SAVOY

W. G. KELSO

"All those tips—and extras!" wailed Helen. "All for nothing!"

"'All for nothing,' is good! Your bloomin' duds——"

"But I asked you," unwisely argumentative. "I asked you if that old suit would do. You knew about the Kelsos—yet you said anything was good enough!"

"What if I did? Got 'nough to do without passin' on your clothes! Tickets, reservations, luggage, half a dozen kinds of money—and gettin' stung on this damned exchange! All you do is tag along. Can't even dress yourself without pesterin' me. Want me to tell you what to wear—write your fool postcards—be feedin' you with a spoon next!"

Then, savagely, as he flopped down by the window:

"I'm fed up with your Dumb Dora helplessness. Talk 'bout your female plants! As a dead-weight clinging-vine—you're a top-liner!"

A London "Service Flat" Awaits Their Arrival on a Fog-Gloomed Night

"Same old fog!" growled Warren.

"I love it!" Helen peered out at the mist-blurred lights. "It seems more like London."

"Darn damp and chilly," drawing up the glass in the taxi door.

"We'll have a fire. Dear, aren't you glad it's the same flat? I can see you in that big chair before the grate. I hope it'll all be just the same. You never want things to change in London."

"Stand a change in the weather! Fed up with this bloomin' fog last year."

"Pall Mall!" eagerly. "The Haymarket! Garland's Hotel—remember that manageress? The Monument!" as they sped on towards Trafalgar Square. "How wonderful through this mist! Oh, don't you love it? You KNOW you love London!"

"Hope there's no slip-up 'bout that flat," as they swung into Horseguards Avenue. "What'd I do with that letter?"

"Dear, everybody there knows us now. The English are always wonderful to you when you go back," scanning the letter he took from his wallet.

"Warren E. Curtis, Esq.,
Hotel Continental,
Paris.

Dear Sir:

The flat you had last year has been leased by Sir Robert Treadwell, who is now in Scotland for the shooting. Upon our recommendation, he has consented to sublet it for the fortnight you designate.

We are glad to welcome you and Mrs. Curtis back to Whitehall Court, and trust you will be most comfortable.

Yours respectfully,
G. L. Dowey, Ass't Mgr.,
Whitehall Court."

"Nothing about the rate," anxioused Helen. "What if it's more?"

"We'll pay it, that's all! Darn lucky to get in. Whole lot more comfortable than a hotel. Best address in London, too. And what's more important—they've got a corking good restaurant!"

"There it is!" as the great grim structure loomed through the murky night.

Whitehall Court! The imposing buildings that housed the Liberal, Junior Army and Navy, Golfers', West Indian, Authors', and other exclusive clubs.

They were drawing up now before the portal lights of No. 4.

"The same doorman!" glowed Helen. "What's his name? Parks—isn't it?"

A beaming welcome from the gold-braided dignitary. Their bags carried in, he rushed back to help with the trunks.

The heavy double doors, the lofty halls with the rich dark woodwork and checkered marble floors. The same stately atmosphere that had always thrilled Helen.

"Your flat's all ready for you, sir," the lift man assured them.

Fifth floor. Through a spacious private hall, and finding the key under the rug, he ushered them into the ideal English "service flat."

Sitting-room, bedroom, and a monstrous bath. Substantially furnished with all the accessories of English comfort.

Heavy damask draperies, overstuffed chairs, fur rugs, cushions, and many shaded lamps.

The fresh flowers, laid fires, and polished brass were cheerful notes of welcome.

"Well, here's where we get thawed out!" Warren touched a match to the sitting-room grate. "Light the one in the bedroom, too?"

"No, no, it'll be too hot to sleep. Oh, here come the trunks!"

"Will you want this in the bedroom, m'am?"

"Yes, and the other in the bathroom—just where we had them last year."

A knock at the half-open door. The maid. But not the same maid!

"Oh, has Judkins left?" dismayed Helen.

"No, m'am, it's her evening off." Then when

she drew the curtains, "Anything I can do, m'am? Shall I help you unpack?"

"No, thank you, not tonight," evaded Helen.

Another knock. The valet. The same valet!

"Yes, it's Higgins, sir," with his toothy smile. "Glad to see you back, sir. I see you came from Paris," glancing at their bags. "Good crossing, sir?"

"Rotten!"

"Apt to be a bit rough this time of year, sir. Any clothes to brush or press? Any boots, sir?"

"Not tonight, Higgins. Have some for you in the morning."

"Very good, sir."

"Well, we're here!" Warren sank into the big chair before the fire. "Not bad, eh? The English know how to take care of you. Nothing like these service flats for solid comfort. Hello, don't remember that sideboard!"

"No, that must be his. And this lovely old china! I wonder if he has all his meals served up here? Staffordshire!" examining one of the plates. "If we should break anything! Dear, we must be awfully careful!"

"He's got some good books here," hitching his chair to the low open shelves. "History, political economy, travel——"

"Excuse me, sir!" The valet again. "I forgot to ask about your bath. What time would you like it drawn? At eight, sir?"

"Not tomorrow. I'm going to rest up. You needn't come till I ring."

"Very good, sir."

"Well, this's the life!" Taking from the bottom shelf "Tiger-Hunting in India," he adjusted the reading lamp.

"Dear, before you get settled—come lift out these trays."

"Eh? Why didn't you let that maid help you? What she's here for."

"I didn't want her. I'd much rather unpack alone."

"Same old boat!" Warren grinned at the massive wood-bound tub, as he unlocked the trunk in the bathroom.

"'R. T.'," deciphering the monogram on the towels. "Then he furnishes his own linen. Do we have it laundered or the house? They charge extra for everything. Last year they even put brass polish and chimney cleaning on the bill!"

"Now don't start on that! The English always ring in extras. But we'll not worry over a few shillings. Hello, what's this?" stalking into the bedroom.

"Why, they've taken out the dressing-table and put that in! He must be a bachelor," opening the great mahogany valet-wardrobe.

With British thoroughness every compartment was labeled. Shirts, Waistcoats, Pajamas, Collars, Boots, Spats, Socks, Cravats.

"Huh, bet Higgins's achin' to park my stuff in here. Won't make much of a showin'. Not as strong on clothes as Sir Robert."

"Oh, he's left a lot of boxes!" raising the crétonne flounce, Helen peered under one of the beds. "A traveling case—I wonder what's in it? It's been everywhere—Singapore, Cape Town, Melbourne! Oh, I love those labels!"

"Like to swipe 'em, wouldn't you? Soak 'em off and slap 'em on your trunk!"

"What's this?" now exploring under the other bed. "Something in a sheet."

"Here, stop your snoopin' around! Where d'you want this tray?"

"No, not on the bed—that lovely silk comforter! On this chair."

"Now if you're going to fuss around in here—you'd better have this fire. Cool off quick enough when we open the windows."

Glowingly cheerful with that crackling blaze! She tried not to think of the charge for each fire. What was it? Two shillings—or one and six?

But they were paying so much for the flat—absurd to worry over extras. And her small economies always irritated Warren.

For the next hour, Helen was purringly happy distributing their things in the familiar chests and cupboards. The joy of familiarity! Of coming back—of doing the same thing in the same way year after year!

"Having a good time?" Warren glanced up as she arranged on the mantel some of her treasured antiques—snuff boxes and *reliquiæ* bought in Vienna.

"Oh, I love it! I always love getting settled over here. But it's only for two weeks," wistfully. "I wish it were two months."

"Well, I don't!" throwing on more coal with the polished brass tongs. "I got to get back on the job. Holy Smoke, you never satisfied? Here I blow you to a couple of weeks in London every year—and you put up a kick to stay longer!"

"You know I didn't mean it that way," curling up on the white fur rug at his feet. "Dear, not another cigar! Where's your pipe—it's much more English. In your suitcase? Wait, I'll get it."

"Bring my slippers!" he called after her.

His pipe lit, his slippered feet on the polished fender, Warren leaned back with a contented grunt.

"Now, aren't you comfy?" again curled on the rug, Helen poked the fire to a larger blaze. "There's something so snug and cozy about these English flats. You'd never get this atmosphere in a furnished apartment at home."

"Well, these open fires beat radiators. You can spit in 'em, for one thing!"

"You always say that—it's not a bit funny. Listen—Big Ben!" as the great Parliament clock boomed out. "Ten! Oh, something scorching!" she sniffed. "Don't you smell it? Your shoe!" rescuing the one he had left on the fender.

"You can give those to Higgins when we leave. Last shoes I'll ever have made here. Third pair that's cracked on me!"

"I never knew why you got shoes here, anyway.

They can't touch the American shoes," admiring her own slim pumps. "But do start your suits in time. That tailor's so slow! And this year you're going to get an overcoat."

"Who said I was? What's the matter with that brown one? Well, it's good enough!"

"Dear, let's make a list of the things we want to get!" indefatigably. "Give me a pencil."

"Now no list-makin' tonight! Jove, you always got to be doin' something. Don't be so blamed restless. Turn down that pep! Now tomorrow's Sunday. I'm not goin' to do a darn thing—not even write letters! Sleep late, have breakfast served up here—and loaf all day."

"Yes, we'll rest up tomorrow. But if it's nice—let's take a bus-ride in the afternoon," eagerly anticipating her yearly orgies of long, blissful, London bus-top rides. "We'll go out to Wormwood Scrubbs, or Putney, or Seven Kings, or——"

"Not much we won't!" savagely. "You'll not drag me on any of those tiresome jaunts. Been chasin' around Europe for the last two months. Fed up with rushin' all over the map. Now no bus-ridin', no galleries, no museums! We're parked in darn comfortable quarters here—and we're going to stay PUT! Just watch me settle down and do a loaf!"

Warren Yields His Restful Sunday to the Lure of an Aylesbury Duck

Snuggled under the covers, drowsily Helen watched the laying of their bedroom fire.

Judkins! The same maid they had had last year. Noiselessly she took out the ashes, laid the paper, kindling, coal, and brushed up the hearth.

Then stole out, softly closing the door.

After nine! Helen glanced at Warren's watch on the stand between their beds.

He was still sleeping heavily. That tiring trip from Paris yesterday!

But now they were in London! The gray misty lure of London! She begrudged every moment wasted in bed.

Stealthy sounds. Judkins "doing" their sitting-room.

An awakening grunt from Warren.

"Dear, it's after nine. Hadn't we better get up?"

"Sunday!" he yawned. "Nothin' to do but rest."

"Oh, there's Big Ben! Half past! I'm getting up, anyway. Think, dear, we're in London!"

"Shut that window! And have 'em make a fire in here. Don't mind the cold—but this damp chill gets in your bones."

"The fire's all ready to light—she just laid it."

Throwing on her robe, Helen closed the heavy double windows, and touched a match to the grate.

"How 'bout kippers for breakfast? Punch that bell! Better order now."

"No, dear, let's go down," thinking of the extra service charge.

"Now no nickel-nursing! We took this flat to be comfortable. Have our breakfasts up here!"

"Did you ring, m'am?" Judkins entered from the sitting-room. "Good morning, m'am—I'm glad to see you back again. Good morning, sir."

"Yes, it's nice we could get the same flat," Helen was brushing her hair. "Have you been well, Judkins? Everything just the same?"

"I want to order breakfast," broke in Warren, still in bed.

"Yes, sir, I'll send Higgins right in, sir."

The fire was blazing up now. The polished brass and mahogany reflected the cheerful glow.

"Don't you love it?" thrilled Helen. "There's nothing so cozy as an English flat. This chintz always brightens up a bedroom."

"Good morning. Shall I run your bath now, sir?" The valet was at the door.

"I'll order breakfast first. What d'you recommend, Higgins? Kippers?"

"Kippers are always good, sir. The bloaters run very nice this time of year. And the fresh fish this morning is whiting, sir."

"Whiting? The one they cook with its tail in its

mouth?" Helen was rummaging in her trunk. "I'll have that."

"Guess I'll stick to kippers," Warren reached for his bathrobe.

"Anything to follow, sir?"

"Bacon and eggs! Any Wiltshire bacon? That's all right, you needn't have it!" at Helen's protest.

"But I'm ready for a full-sized breakfast."

"Very good, sir. I'll draw your bath now, sir."

"Darn more interested in that bath than he is in breakfast," grumbled Warren, slouching out of bed.

"Dear, we've been having only coffee and rolls —and now you order this heavy——"

"No more Continental breakfasts for me! In England now. Goin' to have a real British breakfast," as he shuffled to the bath.

Helen, having to wait until he was through, the proper procedure in England, finished the unpacking started the night before.

Two weeks! Settling down for two weeks before they sailed. In the same "service flat" they had last year—now sublet from Sir Robert Treadwell.

"Get out my heavies!" shouted Warren from the bathroom. "Need 'em here."

"Oh, you're shaving? You'll have to hurry," handing in the underwear.

"Plenty of time," lathering on the soapy mask. "They're slow as pond water."

Serving breakfast at Whitehall Court was a serious, complicated ceremony.

First came a tray with the linen, silver, china and marmalade.

The table drawn before the sitting-room fire, the valet proceeded to set it.

By the time the breakfast tray proper arrived Warren was shaved and dressed.

"You'll find those kippers very nice, sir," when Higgins served the crisply grilled herrings. "I'll put the bacon and eggs down here, sir, to keep them warm," placing a covered dish on the fender before the glowing grate.

"Yes, that kipper's all right, Higgins." Warren forked into the rich, brown meat. "Can't get 'em that way in America—not the same flavor."

"Oh, look, the pigeons! The ones we fed last year!"

Snatching a piece of toast, Helen ran out on the stone balcony.

"Here, shut that window!"

But with the friendly pigeons pecking from her hand she was blissfully unmindful of Warren's irate shouts.

"Remember that lame one?" coming back for more toast. "Fatter than ever!"

"Greedy beggars! Just waitin' for hand-outs. Sit down and eat your breakfast. Take this," giving her his empty kipper plate. "Now my bacon and eggs!"

With her napkin Helen lifted from the fender the hot, covered dish.

"Can't beat this Wiltshire bacon! Lean—from

the shoulder. Never get that cut at home. Want some? Here, try a piece."

"No, no," mincing at her flaky whiting. "I can't change from just coffee and rolls to a heavy breakfast the first day."

"Well, I can! If they'd only give you hot toast. Always cool it off in these damned racks!"

Spearing a piece on her fork Helen held it over the glowing coals.

"There, now butter it while it's hot! That's delicious sweet butter."

His bacon and eggs dispatched, she re-toasted two more slices for his orange marmalade.

"Well, that's one good breakfast!" leaning back.

"I'll save this for the pigeons. I guess we can keep this plate."

"Was everything all right, sir?" Higgins came in for the tray.

"Great! Repeat on that tomorrow. 'Bout eight-thirty. Want to get started early. And I'd like a paper now—the *Referee* or the *Observer*."

"Very good, sir," dexterously clearing the table.

Warren settled in the big chair with the *Sunday Observer*, Helen sorted their two-weeks-of-fast-travel laundry.

"Dear, will you make a list of these while I count them? Oh, never mind!" at his muttered invective. "I'll do it myself."

And her blue suit to be cleaned! She must send that tomorrow. In London dry-cleaning always

took a "fortnight"—unless one paid double for "express."

"Don't you want to read to me?" when finally she settled down with an armful of hosiery.

"No, I DON'T! Great guns, can't you ever leave me alone?"

Half an hour of darning. Planning things "to do" and "to buy" in London.

"Dear, it's getting too hot," pushing back from the fire. "Oh, the sun through this mist!" as she opened the window. "Do come out here—this light on the river!" looking down the embankment to that gray, grim pile—the Houses of Parliament. "Don't you love this view?"

"It's London, all right!" yawned Warren, following her out on the balcony.

"That bridge in this haze—like a Whistler etching! That's Waterloo, isn't it? And way down there—is that London Bridge?"

"No, Blackfriars. Can't see London Bridge from here. Too misty."

"But, dear, it's not damp now. It's going to be a wonderful day!" eagerly. "Couldn't we take a bus-top ride—just out to Wormwood Scrubbs?"

"Now no bus-rides!" belligerently. "Told you that last night. Goin' to rest up today. Not budge from this flat. Shut that window!" he stepped back into the room. "Cooled off enough."

Again he settled with his paper, again Helen took up her mending.

But the lure of a bus-top ride was strong within

her. If Warren only loved it as she did—those long explorations out through the London suburbs.

Adventuring in London! To scramble up on any bus—to see where it took you. Staying on to the end of the route! And back another way!

"Dear, you remember that wonderful dinner out at Richmond?" artfully. "The Greyhound Inn, wasn't it? You wanted to go out there again sometime."

"Now tune off on that! You don't drag me out today!"

"But we're going out somewhere for dinner?"

"Who said so? Goin' to have dinner right here. If you feel so all-fired peppy—get out on your own. Bus-ride the whole darn day if you want to!"

"I wouldn't enjoy it alone—you know I wouldn't."

"Then stop harping on it. I'm NOT goin'—that's THAT!"

Another half hour. Warren now figuring over his letter of credit. Helen running a tuck in a Paris costume slip.

To waste a whole day—with the enchantment of London outside! The gray antiquity in this softening mist. Old-world streets, quaint rambling byways.

A tinkling bell from the desk. The telephone!

"Hello! . . . Mr. Curtis? Just a moment. Dear, somebody we know," her hand over the instrument. "His voice sounds familiar."

"Who in blazes knows we're here?" with a savage kick at the hassock.

"Yes? . . . Who? . . . Tregaskis? Well, Jimmy, old skate, how are you? . . . Just last night . . . No, rotten crossing . . . She's well . . . What time? . . . Hampstead bus from Charing Cross? . . . Good!"

Helen stood in rapt expectancy as he hung up the receiver.

"Wants us to come out for supper. Remember that feed they gave us last year? Aylesbury duck and Yorkshire ham! Couldn't turn that down! He says leave here 'bout three—get out in time for tea. Takes an hour."

"And we're going on a bus-top?" ecstatically.

"Huh, get your bloomin' ride after all, don't you? Got Jimmy Tregaskis to thank for that. Nobody else could've dug me out today. Their cook's a humdinger! Best grub we ever had in London."

Then, with a yawning glance at his watch:

"Almost one now. Think I'll pull off a snooze. That blamed fire makes me sleepy," slumping down on the couch. "Guess we'll pass up lunch. Want a full-sized appetite for that supper. Hope we get a repeat on the Aylesbury duck!"

Helen's Ardent Love for Animals Naively Solves Their Passage Problem

Piccadilly at dusk!

The swarm of home-bound clerks, the endless line of packed buses, the booming din of traffic, the shouts of cockney street venders.

On the Swan & Edgar corner Helen waited by a window of "6 Guinea" gowns. But the simpering wax figures failed to lure her.

Warren had said six. It was now almost half past!

Then she saw him—elbowing his way toward her.

"Waitin' long? Been at the steamship office."

"Oh, did they have anything better?" eagerly.

"Not a darn thing! No cancellations," steering her through the crowd. "Afraid to wait any longer—so I nailed that room."

"Not that inside one—way down on 'E' deck?"

"It's that or nothing! And I've got to go by that boat."

"But, dear, that man you know? The one who always takes care of us——"

"Still on his holidays. This other bird's hard-boiled. I put up a stiff fight—but he wouldn't come across. The boat's full—but they've always something in reserve."

"'E' deck!" dismayed Helen. "Dear, I'll die down there. And inside, too—not a breath of air! I'll be sick all the way over."

"Best I could do! Now drop it! Where we goin' for dinner?"

"We haven't been to the Cheshire Cheese this trip," trying not to think of the wretched homeward voyage.

"Take too long to get down in this jam. I'm tired —want to go somewhere near. How 'bout the Carlton Grill?"

"No, dear, we can go to hotel restaurants at home. We've only four more nights in London —let's go to some old chop house."

"Not many left 'round here. By George, I've got it! That place Bennett took me to lunch— Crowley's! Best meal I've had this trip. Come on, it's not far," hailing a taxi.

"Crowley's?" puzzled the driver. "I don't seem to know that, sir."

"Been there over two hundred years—ought to know it," growled Warren. "Well, drive up Oxford to the top of Bond."

Only three more days! Forcing back the thought of the stateroom, Helen reveled in the soft mist, blurred lights, and smoky odor of London.

Oxford Street now. More cluttered, overcrowded show-windows. The English shopman's idea of displaying his stock.

"Pull up along here!" Warren's cane signaled the driver.

"Oh, what a quaint old place!" as she sprang out. "Almost opposite Marshall & Snelgrove's—and I've never noticed it!"

The narrow, sagging, old-world house shrank back from the menacing modern shops.

"Crowley's. Est. 1712" was the faded sign over the dingy doorway.

A low, sawdusted room with a charcoal grill in the rear. Deserted, except for three men with mugs of ale at one of the bare wooden tables.

"Guess they don't do much here at night—a lunch place. Let's take a look upstairs."

Up dark, steep steps to a low, oak-beamed room. A solitary diner at the long table that filled the floor space.

"Not very lively," grumbled Warren, as they slid in on the wall bench. Then, as a shirt-sleeved waiter appeared, "Serve dinner here?"

"Give you a nice chop, sir. But no joints at night."

"How 'bout some fish first? Had some rippin' sole here the other day."

"I'll ask the cook, sir."

"Well, see if you can't fix us up. And some of that Musty Ale!"

"This old beamed ceiling—and that huge fireplace!" enthused Helen. "But things don't look over-clean."

"Now pipe down on that! You always want to come to these old places—then kick 'cause they're not slicked up like a pink tea-room."

The waiter re-appeared, his greasy alpaca coat a decorous tribute to Helen.

"The cook's grilling you the sole, sir," placing before them two foaming pewter mugs. "Will you have the chops underdone, sir?"

"Yes, well underdone. Some bubble-and-squeak —and grilled tomatoes."

A heavy tread on the steps. A ruddy, well-groomed Englishman entered.

At his stiff bow of recognition Warren nodded curtly.

Helen's whispered, "Who is it?" was rebuffed with a silencing scowl.

"Good evening, sir," the waiter wiped off the table before the newcomer.

"Loin chop with kidney. Pint of half-and-half. How are you, Peter?" as a huge black cat jumped up on the bench beside him.

Apparently they were old friends, for the behind-the-ear massage was expectantly received.

When the Englishman dismissingly took up his newspaper, Peter, with stately reluctance, responded to Helen's come-hither glance.

"Oh, how big and fat! No? Won't you let me pet you?"

"Owns the place," grumped Warren. "Saucy beggar. Ah, here comes our sole!"

"Be careful, sir, that plate's very 'ot. You'll find that very nice, sir."

"Looks great! You can't beat the English sole."

Warren's geniality expanded under the grilled

sole and Musty Ale, but the Deck "E" stateroom still gloomed Helen's thoughts.

"Dear, tomorrow I'm going down to that steamship office and see what I can do," impulsively. "What's his name? Gilson? If I tell him how ill I'll be in an inside room—that I MUST have air—he might——"

"Now, that's all settled!" sharply. "Here, you won't get this at home!"

"No, no more! But, dear, if I approach him right—you bluster so! You antagonize people—you demand things. I got that room in Paris after the clerk told you they hadn't any. Now I'm going down——"

An under-the-table nudge from Warren. A silencing warning nudge!

What had she said? Puzzled, she glanced around. No one but the Englishman, now dispatching the loin chop behind his propped-up *Evening Standard*.

"At least I can ask if there's any cancellation—"

"Now I've attended to our passage. That's settled! Hand me the salt! By the way, I ran into Tracey today—just got back from Spain. Had a great time. Says we ought to go there next year. How 'bout it?"

"No, no, not to Spain! They're too cruel to animals. Those horrible bull-fights! Those poor old horses—blindfolded and helpless," with a shudder. "Ring Lardner wrote it up. He said no lover of horses could stand it."

"Well, we can go to Spain without takin' in a bull-fight."

"I don't want to go, anyway. I've seen pictures of their wretched cab horses. That's why I love the English—they're SO good to animals. Aren't they, Peter?" stroking the sleek ball of fur, now dozing on the bench beside her.

"Too underdone, sir? A little more fire?"

"No, just right!" Warren viewed the smoking chops.

"No more bubble-and-squeak, sir, but I brought you some vegetable marrow. And the tomatoes will be right up, sir."

"Look, dear, he smells the chop. Yes, I'll give you some!"

But the bit of browned fat was sniffingly refused.

"Choosey, aren't you? Want some of the lean? There! That cunning white nose—and white spats, too! My, how loud you purr! I'd love to take you with us. Would you like to go to America? You would?" Then, with a sigh, "But I'm afraid you wouldn't enjoy the trip—not in that inside stateroom."

"Stop foolin' with that cat!" grouched Warren. "Your chop's gettin' cold."

"I'd like some sauce with it. Harvey's or Escoffer's."

"You don't want to spoil that with sauce," he frowned. "The real flavor—cooked over charcoal! Can't get a better chop in London."

"Well, I'd like something with it—a salad," caring little for meat. "Dear, he didn't bring us a menu."

"No menus here! You take what they've got. Doubt if they've any salad—but you can get some celery. Serve that with cheese. Had some great Stilton here for lunch."

The Englishman, who had followed his chop and vegetables with Cheddar and watercress, now gathered up his gloves and stick.

"Pardon me, but I couldn't help hearing what you said about bull-fights. I was in Spain two years ago and saw part of one. I left before it was over. It's no sport for anyone who loves horses."

"That's why I'll never go there—nor Mexico, either! But England—you've such wonderful horses here!" glowed Helen, eagerly responsive.

"I'm glad you think we're good to animals. So you'd like to take Peter with you?" tweaking the black ears. "Then we'll have to make him comfortable. If you'll stop at the office tomorrow, Mr. Curtis, we'll try to fix you up with a better stateroom."

Helen could only stare as the color flamed her face. His stiff bow when he entered—and Warren's warning nudges! She should have known!

"That's mighty decent of you, Mr. Gilson," Warren had risen.

"Right after you left, we had a cancellation. An 'A' deck room—outside. I'll attend to the transfer."

A final tweak of Peter's ears, a British bow, and he was gone.

"Well, what d'you know 'bout that?" grinned Warren as he sat down.

"He heard everything I said!" fluttered Helen. "Oh, what DID I say?"

"Said you were goin' down to vamp him! I tried to tip you off—but you kept on chewin' the rag. Guess he thought he'd rather cough up now —than have you buttin' in tomorrow."

"On 'A' deck—outside!" ignoring his ungracious version. "Oh, he was wonderful—I could've hugged him! And just because he loves animals —and he saw I did," exultantly, cuddling Peter. "You always fuss about my 'gushing' over cats —but it got us an 'A' deck stateroom!"

"And I'll never hear the end of it! That'll be your new record. If you pull off anything—trust you to harp on it. I get all the reservations for the whole darned trip. If I don't land the best there is every time—guess my average isn't so rotten!"

Then, as the waiter entered:

"How's the Stilton runnin'? Good and ripe? Well, two on that—with celery and brown biscuits. And here," shoving over his tankard, "a double repeat on the Musty!"

A British Doctor's Exorbitant Fee Proves a Provocative Panacea

"Here, take out one of these pillows!" grumbled Warren. "And fix that curtain—shines right in my eyes. Where's my handkerchief?"

"Why, you just had it," Helen drew the heavy damask curtain. "There—under your pillow."

"Jove, I feel rocky! Think I've got a fever?"

"No, dear," feeling his forehead. "But all that rich food last night—with your cold—to burden your stomach with steak and kidney pie and that stewed cheese!"

"Huh, that never hurt me. You want to stuff a cold. Got a hand-glass? Let's have a look at my throat. Turn on that light! Hold it here!"

Sitting up, he examined his throat by the bedside lamp.

"Thought so—inflamed! All red—and sore as blazes! This rotten London weather! Here's where I have a doctor."

"Open wider!" peering over his shoulder. "Why, dear, it doesn't look inflamed to me."

"Doesn't eh?" belligerently. "My throat—guess I know how it feels. Got a temperature, too. Now you get a doctor! Call down to the office."

"Here's Higgins with the lemons. We'll ask him."

"I brought some sugar, too, m'am." The valet placed a tray on the table.

"Higgins, Mr. Curtis thinks he ought to have a doctor. Is there any here in the house?"

"Sir Harvey Dring, m'am. But he takes only serious cases."

"Well, a sore throat and a fever are darned serious!" bristled Warren. "Now you get somebody right away!"

"Very good, sir. And I'll send the maid with some coals. The fire's a bit low."

"Can't keep that blamed handkerchief!" again fumbling under his pillow.

"Here's a fresh one. Now I'll make the lemonade. I'll put in a little sherry."

"Put in a lot!" hunching up the covers. "Good for a cold."

In the huge, dreary, English bathroom, Helen heated the water on the alcohol tea-stand, an appointment of their "service" flat.

What if they could not sail Saturday? Only two more days!

But Warren was always an alarmist. His slightest pain or ache always serious.

Leaving the water to heat, she ran back to his impatient summons.

"Forgot that confounded tailor! Ring him up—call off that fitting."

"Why, I thought you were all through? Isn't he to deliver them tomorrow?"

"Only the two suits. Wants another try-on for

the overcoat. But tell him to go ahead and finish it up."

"Wadley & Brooks, isn't it? What's the number?"

"Look in my pocket. Other side!" as she fumbled in his coat on the chair. "And while you're at it, call up the Army & Navy 'bout those shirts."

"Dear, here comes Judkins! Now I'll ask her about that hot-water bag."

The maid, entering with a bucket of coal, knelt before the fire.

"Judkins, Mr. Curtis doesn't like that stone jug. Can't you get a bag?"

"I'll ask the 'ousekeeper, m'am. But we mostly use the jugs here."

"Can't budge the bloomin' thing!" kicking the heavy jug at his feet.

"Now, dear, take a little of this," urged Helen, when she brought in the lemonade. "Too hot?" at his muttered invective. "You want it hot."

"Don't want to scald my innards. Ugh, sour! No sherry in that!"

"Yes, I put in a lot. Drink it! There, doesn't that warm you? Now if you could take a little nap?" hopefully, straightening the covers.

"Well, I can't! Feel too rotten to sleep."

"Shall I read to you?" taking up the *Telegraph.* " 'Stormy Scene in House of Commons.' No? Here's an editorial on 'Labor Unrest in America'."

"Helluva lot they know 'bout it! Always spoutin' labor unrest over here."

"Oh, these personals! Dear, they're too funny for words! Listen to this:

> " 'F. W. No letter. All is forgiven. H. L.'
>
> " 'Will the lady in black who got off at Charing Cross Tube Station be at same place Sunday at three? Grey Bowler.'
>
> " 'Have you forgotten? I must see you. Marie'."

"Here, pass up that slush! Do something for this headache!"

"Dear, if you'd try not to think of it——"

"Huh, that not-thinking-of-it may work with you —but I'm SICK! Don't that feel hot?" pressing her hand to his forehead.

"Why, you just had that hot lemonade—and that jug at your feet!"

"Well, I'm not takin' any chances in this bum climate. Get a doctor!"

"Why, you sent Higgins—— Oh, there's someone now!"

Only a delivery boy with a package.

"Your shirts. Now I won't have to 'phone. Do you want to see them?"

"No! And don't want to be read to, either!" as she took up the paper.

"Then try to take a nap—and I'll pack. If I

must go to the bank and to Suckling's tomorrow—I ought to get some of the packing done today."

"Ought to pack in an hour! You make hard work of everything," he flopped over.

In London two weeks, Helen had displayed in the sitting-room her bought-on-the-Continent treasures. Needlework pictures, snuff boxes, bits of old crystal and ivory. These she now collected to pack first.

"Why can't you do your packin' in here?" bellowed Warren, resenting being left alone.

"I had to get these," entering, her arms full. "Oh, she threw out that tissue-paper," opening the wardrobe. "Now I'll have to wrap them in newspaper."

"Worryin' a darn sight more 'bout that packin' than you are 'bout me! Here give me another pillow! Heat this thing! Where's that hot-water bag she was to dig up? And where's Higgins? What 'bout that doctor?"

"If he doesn't come soon, I'll call down. There, that more comfy?" patiently, putting back the pillow he had ordered removed. "Now I'll heat this."

In the bathroom, the water only lukewarm, she again resorted to the alcohol tea-kettle.

"How long's it take you?" rumbled Warren. "What're you doin' in there?"

"I'll be right in. I have to heat the water."

Filling the unwieldy stone jug, the boiling stream splashed over.

"Eh? What's the matter now?" at her cry of pain.

Clasping her scalded hand, she stumbled into the bedroom.

"What happened? Burn yourself? Bring any of that pain-cure?"

"No, I haven't a thing," tremulously.

"Well, don't think 'bout it—that's what you tell me. See who that is! Maybe it's the doctor."

The wardrobe-mirror reflected her white face as she turned to the door.

A stiff, pompous Englishman. Silk hat, monocle, morning coat, hair-line trousers, spats, and an important black case.

Helen ushered him into the bedroom. But, intent on her smarting hand, she was oblivious to the introductory questions and brief examination.

"No temperature?" bristled Warren. "Felt feverish all day!"

"Nothing but a heavy cold," casing his thermometer. "Our fogs don't always agree with you Americans."

"What 'bout this sore throat? What're you goin' to do for that?"

"Just a slight irritation. Keep warm and don't overload your stomach. Mostly slops for a day or two."

"But, see here, doctor, we're booked to sail Saturday. Think I can risk it?"

"Best thing you could do. The sea air will cure that cold."

Then, taking up his bag, he glanced at the half-packed trunk.

"If you're sailing Saturday perhaps you'll pay my fee now."

"Certainly. What do I owe you?" brusqued Warren.

"Five guineas."

Five guineas? Twenty-five dollars! Helen's amazed indignation nulled the pain in her hand.

"Give me my wallet!" ordered Warren. "There, in my coat."

The five crisp pound-notes counted out lacked five shillings to make the five guineas.

"Look in my trouser pocket. Any change there?"

Instead of waiving the change, Sir Harvey waited with British impassivity while Helen made up the five shillings with sixpences and coppers.

A formal, "Thank you," an austere bow, and he strode out.

"Twenty-five dollars!" gasped Helen. "And he waited for the last farthing! Why did you pay it? Why didn't you say it was too much?"

"Soaked us, all right!" giving the pillow an irate punch. "Sir Harvey Dring!" with a snort. "Guess we paid for the handle. No more British doctors for me! Twenty-five bucks to be told to eat slops!"

"Slops? I suppose he meant broths. Dear, that was an outRAGEOUS fee! He wasn't here five minutes, and he didn't even—— Oh!" flinching with pain as she replaced his wallet.

"Why didn't you show him that burn? Might've got somethin' for our twenty-five."

"It couldn't have happened at a worse time," ruefully, bandaging a handkerchief about her blistered wrist. "With all this packing—and waiting on you——"

"Let the maid do the packin'—that's what she's for. And you don't have to wait on me—I'll wait on myself. Feel better now. Did me good to get stirred up at that fleece-artist. Soakin' you may be part of that high-hatter's treatment. Cured my headache, all right."

Sitting up, impatiently he elbowed the pillows back of him.

"Here, fix these right! No, not high enough. Get another pillow. Then roll up my bathrobe. There, that'll do. Now my brief case! I'll check up some of those papers. See if my pen's there—vest pocket. No? Then give me yours. Wonder you wouldn't ever fill it! Get a pencil!"

While Helen fluttered attendance, he spread the papers on the bed.

"Can't see here—pull back that curtain! Now a pad to figure on. Yes, anything'll do. That infernal handkerchief! What the Sam Hill'd I do with it? Well, get another. Where'll I put all these? Push up that chair. There, that's better. Now here's where I tear off some work! What's the matter? Hand still hurt? Well, go lie down. Eh? Why can't you? Haven't a darn thing to do!"

An Awkward Interview Follows the Exposure of a Serious Feminine Subterfuge

"What 'bout that suit you bought in Vienna?" Warren was scowling over their declaration. "Got that down here?"

"Why, I've almost worn it out! We don't have to declare that," protested Helen, on her knees before her steamer trunk.

"Have to declare everything! Ought to know that by this time. They make allowances for wear. What'd you pay for it? Got the bill?"

"No, but it was awfully cheap. Not quite two million *kronen*."

"Why in blazes don't you keep your bills? Tell you that every trip. 'Bout thirty dollars, then?" writing it in.

"Yes, but say worn—much worn."

"Now I'll go down to the lounge and figure this out," gathering up the Custom blanks. "You hustle and get this stuff packed 'fore dinner. Five now."

Alone, Helen dropped dejectedly on the cluttered bed.

It had been an ideal voyage. A stateroom and bath with all the luxuries of the huge *Olympic*. But the day-before-landing was always clouded by the dreaded Customs.

If Warren would only let her make out her own declaration! He always insisted upon declaring everything—even her antiques!

"Tea, m'am?" the stewardess entered with a tray. "I thought if you were packing—you'd like it in here."

"Thank you. Where'll you put it? Oh, you can close that trunk."

"I brought you some wafers and Dundee cake. Would you like anything else, m'am?" with the tip-expectant solicitude of the voyage end.

As Helen sipped her lemoned tea—another knock at the door.

Mrs. Clinton, wife of the wealthy cotton manufacturer, who had the de luxe suite at the end of the corridor.

"May I come in?" wedging her "stylish stout" through the half-open door.

"If you can get in," laughed Helen, pushing aside a suitcase.

"Oh, don't you loathe this packing? No, don't bother, I can't stay a moment," as Helen cleared a chair. "I just came to ask a favor."

Then, unwrapping a gold-mounted bead bag:

"I bought this in London for my sister—she's to be married next month. She'll be at the dock and she always hangs over my trunks when they're examined. So I wondered if you'd take it in for me?"

"Why, I'd like to," Helen was plainly surprised. "But Mr. Curtis is so strict about the Customs—he makes me declare EVERYthing!"

"Oh, I'm not asking you to smuggle it! Here's the bill. Ten pounds—about fifty dollars. I think the duty's 35 per cent. on bags—that's seventeen fifty," counting out the money. "If it's more—let me know."

"But if Mr. Curtis has handed in our declaration? He just took it down."

"Then you can declare it at the dock—say you forgot it. Irene always snoops around my trunks—it won't seem like a wedding present if she sees it."

"How will I get it to you afterwards?" Helen still demurred.

"Oh, we're under the same letter—C. I'll take it as we leave the dock. You don't mind, do you? Thank you SO much!" fluttering out.

Wondering over the incident, Helen proceeded with the packing.

Though they had played bridge with the Clintons almost every evening of the voyage, she had never quite liked Mrs. Clinton, whose effusiveness seemed a little artificial. But her husband was most likable—fine and direct.

"Still at it?" Warren swung in. "Jove, you're slow!"

"I'm almost through now. You can put those trays in—and shove back that trunk."

"Just passin' the *Majestic*. No, you can't see her from here," peering out the porthole. "Come up on deck—you stuck in here all afternoon."

"Wait, I must put this bag away," opening the suitcase.

"Eh? What've you got there?" sharply. "Let's see it!"

"Now it's nothing I'm trying to smuggle through," resentfully. "It's Mrs. Clinton's! Here's the bill—and the duty. I can say I forgot to declare it."

"What's the big idea? What you got to do with it?"

"A wedding present for her sister—she'll be at the dock. And she's afraid she'll see it when they examine the trunks."

"Huh, got her nerve!" he grunted. "Come on, let's get out—feel like shuffle-board?"

"Isn't that someone knocking?" Helen turned to the door.

Mrs. Clinton again.

"Oh, I forgot to say—if I shouldn't see you as you leave the dock, I'll send for that tomorrow."

Helen's murmured acquiescence concealed her increased surprise.

"Dear, did you notice how she flushed when she saw you? She thought you wouldn't want me to take it. But isn't it all right, if she's paying the duty?"

"Let's see that bag!" curtly. "Somethin' darn queer 'bout this."

"Queer? How, dear?" watching him examine it.

"Give me the scissors!"

"The scissors?"

"Never mind, this'll do," taking out his knife.

"Warren, what ARE you doing? Why, what—"

Elbowing her away, he grimly proceeded to rip the satin lining.

"Thought so! Good hunch!" working out a bit of padding.

His face grew stern as he extricated three glittering stones.

"DIAMONDS!!" amazed Helen.

"Fine frame-up for you!" he exploded.

"I don't believe it? There's some mistake. She didn't put them there!"

"Who did? The manufacturers? Think they're slippin' you a thousand pounds' worth of diamonds with a ten-pound bag?"

"Wait, where're you going?" clutching his arm.

"Goin' to have a little interview with Mrs. Clinton!" shaking her off.

"Oh, don't make a scene! I'll take it back to her. Let me——"

"Now, I'll handle this!" savagely. "Too darn serious! Where'd you be—if the inspectors found these?"

"Why, I'd tell them it wasn't my bag."

"Think they'd believe you? No name on that bill. She'd lie out of it. You'd be the goat. Thousand dollar fine—or a couple of months in jail!"

Helen shrank back in shocked dismay.

"And there's more to it than that! The Customs know every valuable stone bought in Europe.

Jewelers have to register all sales. Her luggage'll be gone over with a fine-toothed comb. That's why she passed 'em on to you."

"But, dear, he'll be there now! Wait and see her after dinner."

"I'll see her NOW! Tough on Clinton—but if she's up to shady stunts like this, he ought to know. Now don't you butt in—I'll settle this!"

Slamming the door, he strode down the corridor.

Ignoring his admonitions Helen ran out after him.

She reached the Clintons' suite just as he entered. Grimly intent on his unpleasant errand, he seemed not to notice her.

"Mrs. Clinton here?" was his brusque demand when her husband opened the door.

"Yes, come in, Curtis. Ethel!" he called. Then, at Warren's stern expression, "What is it? Anything wrong?"

"I'm afraid there is," bluntly. "Dead wrong!"

Mrs. Clinton now appeared from the bedroom, her face chalky white.

"Clinton, did you know your wife bought three large diamonds in Europe?"

"Why, what do you mean?" stiffly. "I don't see that it's——"

"Any business of mine?"

"Exactly!"

"You will see in a moment."

From his cupped hand the three gleaming stones rolled to the table.

"Inside the lining of this bag—that Mrs. Curtis was asked to take in. Draw your own conclusions! I'm putting it pretty raw, Clinton, but I think you ought to know. And I'm mighty sore!"

An excruciating silence. Mr. Clinton, his face brick red, was looking down at his wife, now sobbing on the couch.

"I thought we'd had that all out, Ethel. I told you I'd pay duty on anything you bought. Pay it ten times over rather than have any smuggling!"

Then, turning to Warren:

"Curtis, I'd give ten thousand dollars if this hadn't happened. Mrs. Clinton leans backwards in honesty in everything else. But when it comes to the Customs—well, it's a curious feminine complex."

"Sorry if I put it to you rough," relented Warren. "But I was darn sore."

"I don't blame you. But I'm sure Mrs. Clinton didn't realize in what a serious position she was putting Mrs. Curtis."

"Well, we'll all forget it," abruptly ending the awkward interview.

Helen, a silent, shrinking spectator to the scene, slipped out after him, and down the long corridor.

In their own stateroom Warren stalked the limited space, his hands thrust deep into his pockets—with him always a gesture of agitation.

"Oh, I felt so sorry for him—for them both," faltered Helen on the bed, her feet tucked under her to give more room for his belligerent strides.

"Damned awkward! She got what was coming to her—but he's square!"

"He tried to excuse her. He said——"

"What'd he call it? 'Feminine complex?' That's the highfalutin' term for plain dishonesty! Get that?" turning on her menacingly. "Cheatin' the government's just as dishonest as cheatin' an individual! Same lack of principle!"

"You needn't roar out at me! They weren't my diamonds. I didn't——"

"No, but you got a leanin' that way. If I weren't on to you, you'd sneak through a lot of things. Not diamonds—you wouldn't have the nerve. But you'd shave down your declaration to a mighty few items."

"Dear, I think that's MOST unfair!" flamingly. "I had absolutely nothing to do with this—and now you——"

"Yes, I WANT to rub it in! I want this to be a blamed good lesson for you. And on our next trip—you're to keep every bill and come across with everything you buy. Savvy? We'll have no 'feminine complex' along that line in THIS family! Now come on up and let's get a drink 'fore dinner! Need it after that session!"

PART IV

FAMILY FRICTION

The Resumption of Family Hostilities Glooms Their Sunday Home-Coming

"Who? . . . Mr. and Mrs. Edwards?" in shrill dismay . . . "Why, yes, of course. Bring them right up."

Flushed and flustered Helen turned from the house 'phone.

"CARRIE!!"

"Fine! Haven't seen 'em for two months," Warren was going over the accumulated mail.

"She might've given us time to get unpacked! Quick—close those doors!"

"Now, you don't have to slick up," cramming a bunch of circulars into the waste-basket. "They know we just got in."

"Don't say a THING about presents!" struggling with the folding doors to shut off the baggage-littered dining room. "I CAN'T get them out now!"

"Why not?" bristled Warren. "Might as well give 'em while they're here."

"She'll want to see everything I brought. Now just say we're NOT unpacked! You go!" as the bell rang. "Oh, I hope they haven't brought Bobbie!"

In her own room, Helen decided not to dress. The blue work smock, stressing the untimely intrusion, might hasten their departure.

Voices from the hall. Yes, Bobbie! Shrilling above his mother's staccato.

After two months in Europe, free from Warren's family, the resumption of polite hostilities seemed harder than ever.

With a fixed smile of welcome Helen now entered the library.

A chorus of over-stimulated greeting platitudes.

"You're looking great, Helen!" Lawrence was always genuinely friendly. "Hear you did a lot of flying. How'd you like it?"

"I loved it! Like limousining through the clouds!" lugging in her pet phrase. "No, I wasn't a bit afraid!"

"Um-um, I've my doubts about that," shrugged Carrie. "I can just see you clutching at Warren. Pettie, come away from that window!"

"No, she was a good sport," admitted Warren at Helen's you-tell-them glance. "And they handed us some dizzy dips on that hydroplane!"

"You were very foolish to take such risks after those horrible accidents between Paris and London. Precious, mind Mother! Come away from that window! Lawrence, shut that! The other one, too."

The closing of all windows, lest Bobbie fall out, was an unfailing demand of Warren's sister. One of the many irritations of her dreaded visits.

"Helen, haven't you put on weight? Don't do that, Pettie! You look stouter."

"Only 108," with flushed resentment, "I weighed on the steamer."

"Oh, while I think of it—Aunt Amelia's having trouble with her ear. She wants to come in to a specialist. Can you have her next week?"

"Next week?" dismayed Helen. "Why, we haven't a maid—we won't be——"

"We'll have one by that time," Warren was opening a box of cigars. "These're mild," passing them to Lawrence.

"Then I'll tell her it's all right," decided Carrie. "She won't stay more than a week. Let that radio alone, Precious! Too early for the Bedtime Stories."

"Aunt Helen, what'd you bring me?" sulked Bobbie, still twirling the dials.

"I haven't unpacked yet," evaded Helen, having planned to buy his present here.

"Can't you do it now? Why, can't you? Got any chocolate cake?"

"I'm sorry, Bobbie, we just got in last night. We've nothing in the house."

"Whatcha eat for breakfast?" playing with a burnt match.

"We went out for breakfast. Oh, don't mark up Aunt Helen's table!"

"Aintcha gonna have no dinner?"

"We'll have to go out for dinner. Give Aunt Helen that match!"

"I'm hungry!" straddling a chair arm. "Aintcha got no candy? You sure?"

"Thought I saw a box in my trunk," broke in Warren.

Her one box of foreign confections had not been brought for Bobbie's greedy consumption. But now she must produce it.

Opening the folding doors only far enough to wedge through, before she could close them, Bobbie squirmed in after her.

"Want my present! Why can't you? What's these? Who stuck 'em on your trunk?"

"Oh, don't pull that off!" saving her precious "Hotel Hungaria, Budapest" label from his sharp scraping nails. "Here's the candy—now we'll go back."

In the library she opened the wooden box brought all the way from Italy.

With shrill glee Bobbie snatched at one of the tinfoiled cubes.

"Oh, I forgot—there's *liqueur* in them!" despaired Helen, as a syrupy stream gushed down his chin. "You're getting it on that chair—come away!"

"Like those little chocolate bottles Mrs. Crane sent us," Carrie sampled another as Helen wiped the sticky smudge from the linen-shrouded chair.

"Gimme that gold one!"

"Should he have any more, Carrie? They're full of *liqueur*."

"Not enough to hurt him. Careful, Honeybug, don't get it all over you."

"Where's that cane for Lawrence?" demanded Warren. "Get at that, can't you?"

"Why, dear, you know I haven't started to unpack!"

"Now don't bother," protested Lawrence, always considerate. "No hurry."

"I can get that cane! Saw it in my trunk," Warren started up.

"There's the bell! You'll have to go—I'm not dressed," fluttered Helen, welcoming the intrusion—anything to divert his raid on the trunks.

It was Mrs. Thompson, the superintendent's wife, with Pussy Purr-Mew.

"Is she all right? Yes, I'm sure you took good care of her. Don't, Bobbie, you'll frighten her!" Helen opened the basket. "She's always nervous at first."

"Yes, she was so scared when we took her down. Wouldn't eat for two days. Now she's used to us—we hate to give her up."

"Oh, she's lovely and fat!" cuddling her. "Why, Pussy Purr-Mew, don't you know me?"

Wriggling from Helen's arms she shot across the room. From under the couch her phosphorus eyes gleamed wide and terrified.

"Doesn't even know you!" shrugged Carrie. "Persian cats are so stupid."

"Here's her milk," Mrs. Thompson took a bottle from the basket.

"Oh, thank you, we haven't any yet. Wait, I'll pay you now. Eight weeks, isn't it? Dear, have you sixteen dollars?"

"Guess I've got that much," Warren drew out his wallet. "But gettin' through the Customs put a dent in this roll."

"And you pay two dollars a week for that cat every time you go to Europe?" criticized Carrie, after Mrs. Thompson's exit. "Don't ever say I'm extravagant!"

"Bobbie, you mustn't tease her," admonished Helen. "She'll come out."

"Started to get that cane!" Again Warren made for the dining-room.

With disconcerting visions of his rumpling search, Helen tried to answer Lawrence's questions about their Continental flights.

"I don't know how high—but we were above the clouds. No, we never thought of putting cotton in our ears. Yes, all enclosed—just like a limousine. Oh, awfully cheap—only fourteen dollars from Vienna to Budapest! Yes, they fly all over Europe—we're so far behind here."

"Well, I dug out a few things," Warren strode back. "Here's the cane! This the bag you got for Carrie?"

"A bag? And I just bought one!" disparaged his sister.

"Malacca! A beauty!" Lawrence, always appreciative, was admiring his cane. "Just what I

wanted—left mine in a taxi. Carrie, that's a stunning bag!"

"No place for change?" depreciatingly, exploring the lining.

"You can put any little purse in that inside pocket," resented Helen. "We got that in Vienna —the Wiener Werk Statte. They make the finest leather goods."

"Oh, yes, it's very good looking," her tone implying she would rather have had anything else.

"Nothin' for me?" whimpered Bobbie, tugging at his father's cane.

"Why, yes, of course," propitiated Helen, "but we're not unpacked yet. The next time you come —I'll have it all ready."

"That means Aunt Helen will buy you something here," laughed Carrie, cynically. "Cheaper and easier than bringing things over. Lawrence, we must go! You'll have to drive slow with that loose brake."

"Much obliged for this," flourishing the cane as he rose. "It's a peach!"

"Leave that alone, Precious! Come, we're going home," Carrie held out his coat. "What do you want? That candy? Well, ask Aunt Helen."

But Bobbie, appropriating the box, turned shrewdly to his Uncle Warren.

"Yes, that's all right, Skeezix," rumpling his hair. "Take it along."

"Jackie Wood's gotta airship! Uncle Warren, why didn't you bring me one?"

"Maybe we did. You'll see next time you come."

"Your cap, Precious? You threw it at that cat —there, back of the couch!"

"Yes, some Sunday soon," at Lawrence's invitation, as they waited for the elevator. "Yes, I'll draw up that contract. No, not too busy for that."

"No, don't open it now—you've eaten enough. Give mother the box. Then I'll write Aunt Amelia she can come next week?"

"Yes, we'll put her up," brisked Warren. "Take your hand in, Bobbie. So long!"

Then, as the elevator shot down, he whirled on Helen with a menacing:

"See here, didn't you bring anything for Bobbie?"

"It's absurd to bring toys from Europe—I was going to get him something here. But I might've known Carrie'd rush in the very first day!"

"Well, she sized you up on that, all right. Now, the next time, you bring something for Bobbie—something good, too. Cram the trunks with your antique junk—never want to bring a thing for my family!"

"Your family!" hysterically. "We're always bringing things for your family. It's always your family! And now we must have Aunt Amelia!"

"Well, what of it?" as he stalked back into the library. "First thing we get home you start chewin' the rag 'bout my folks! Hardly civil to 'em!"

"Civil? Why, what did I say? The way she acted about that bag!"

"Oh, that's just Carrie's way," clipping a fresh cigar. "She appreciated it, all right. And wasn't Lawrence tickled with that cane?"

"Yes, he's a dear," admitted Helen, picking up after Bobbie. "But he isn't your family! Wait till Aunt Amelia comes——"

"Now tune off on Aunt Amelia! You get a maid and make her comfortable. What's that? Twice a year? Well, she can come every month if she likes! Now I'm fed up with your roastin' my family—they'll come here whenever they want to! And your mug's goin' to register welcome! Now that's THAT!"

Diverting Aunt Amelia's Dreaded Visitation Proves a Dubious Relief

"What's the matter with this spinach?" growled Warren. "All grit! Tryin' to slip me some ground glass?"

"She didn't half wash it! I told her to put it through three waters—but she pays NO attention to anything I say."

"Shove over that butter. Need somethin' to lubricate this fish. Dry as chips."

"And I told her to make a butter sauce. Now you see! She spends all her time dolling up," resented Helen. "Look, dear, she smells the fish," at an importuning meow from Pussy Purr-Mew. "Yes, you shall have some."

"Trot out the salad now. Can't eat that spinach —enough sand to make concrete. Here, stop feedin' that cat at the table!"

Answering Helen's ring, their new, ultra-modern maid swung through the pantry door. Her iron-tormented hair flaunted the latest bob, and her "compact" complexion was heavily applied.

"Anna, you can bring the salad now. That spinach is so gritty—we can't eat it. I told you to wash it in three waters."

"Washed it good as I could," flouncing out with the depleted bread plate.

"Phew, knockout drops!" Warren sniffed at the cheap perfume.

"Isn't it awful? And she just pours it on! She's going out tonight. Did you notice her make-up? If she'd put that time on washing the spinach—"

Here Anna swung back with the replenished bread plate, and the romaine-tomato salad.

"Holy Smoke, that's sour!" spluttered Warren. "Where's the oil?"

"And it's vinegar—I told her to use lemon juice," getting the oil cruet from the sideboard. "Empty! And I told her to fill it yesterday. Dear, I just CAN'T put up with her—she's impossible!"

"Then fire her," scooping out his baked potato.

"You always say that! What d'you want—the salt? There, behind your glass. You know I can't, with Aunt Amelia coming Saturday."

"Get another, can't you?" slathering on the butter.

"I spent two days at the agencies getting her. Plenty of waitresses and chambermaids—but you just can't get general houseworkers. Sh-sh, she's coming! Anna, fill this oil cruet. I told you to fill it when you did the silver."

"I forgot about it," her tone more defiant than apologetic.

"Oh, she makes me wild!" as the pantry door closed after her. "Dear, if I let her go couldn't you write Aunt Amelia we've no maid—that she'd be more comfortable at a hotel?"

"Now, don't start on that! We said she could come—can't back out now."

"If it were anyone else, I'd let her go and do the work myself. But you know how difficult Aunt Amelia is! She expects so much—you have to wait on her every minute. I just can't do that and the work, too!"

"Nobody wants you to," assaulting the hard, dry mackerel. "Get another girl."

"And break her in by Saturday? Warren, you know I can't!"

Again Anna appeared, deposited the oil cruet, and odoriferously swished out.

"Just look, she didn't even wipe it off!" Helen exposed the oily ring on the cloth. "That's the way she does everything."

"Here," Warren started up, "I'll talk to her!"

"No, no, you'll only explode—you always do! If I must keep her—it'll make things worse if you blow out."

"Then stop chewin' the rag! I'm fed up with that wail. What's in that dish? Brandied peaches? Well, shove 'em over."

Through the salad, chocolate pudding, and coffee, Helen brooded over the dreaded visit of Warren's aunt. She had written she was coming for a week—that meant at least two!

These frequent, lengthy impositions of his querulous, argumentative Aunt Amelia were Helen's greatest trials.

With an ample income and no children, there

was no reason why she should not go to a hotel. But she never did. Cheaper to sponge on her relatives.

"Got a paper?" demanded Warren, when after dinner he strode into the library.

"Dear, I told the elevator boy to tell the newsman——"

"Just 'round the corner. Couldn't you see him yourself? Been home a week and haven't even ordered the papers!"

Not a week. Only four days since they landed. Canvassing the employment agencies, breaking in the new maid, starting the ice, milk, and other supplies—besides getting unpacked and settled, had crowded Helen's every moment.

"Where're my pipe cleaners?" Warren was rummaging through the smoking-stand. "Had a box here somewhere."

"Oh, I was cleaning out the ice drain! Wait, I left them in the kitchen."

"Always swipin' my things! Wish you'd leave 'em alone."

The kitchen all dark!

Anna through—and off so soon?

The light switched on exposed the slovenly disorder of undue haste.

The silver not put away, the tea towels not washed, the dish cloth a wet wad in the soap tray! The oil can left out of the icebox—and the bread on the cutting board!

"No, you can't be hungry," as Pussy Purr-Mew

rubbed ingratiatingly against her. "Your saucer empty? Well, I'll give you some milk."

In the overcrowded icebox the milk bottle was minus its sanitary top. And those creamed onions from last night—everything would smell of them! Her good china butter dish—and that greasy bacon not even on a plate!

Taking out the onions, and scraping the butter onto a kitchen saucer, she closed the icebox to shut out further proofs of Anna's flagrant carelessness.

Then, inconsistently, yielding to a suspicious urge, Helen opened the oven door.

Yes, just as she thought. All the greasy pans had been shoved in—unwashed! Even the fish broiler!

This last outrage flaming her smouldering indignation, she dragged out the pans, and put on an apron.

"How 'bout my pipe cleaners?" glowered Warren from the door. "What the Sam Hill you doin' out here?"

"Dear, WHAT d'you think she did? Hid these dirty pans in the oven!"

"Well, what're you washing 'em for? Chuck 'em back!"

"I can't leave them like this. That fish smells up the whole place!"

"No worse'n that scent she broadcasts! Where're my pipe cleaners?"

"Oh, I forgot—I found things in such a mess. There, on the icebox. Dear, CAN'T Aunt Amelia postpone her visit? If we write her——"

"Nothing doing! You can't put her off now. She's goin' to that ear specialist," jabbing the cleaner through his pipe. "You're always makin' things hard for yourself. Aunt Amelia's not much trouble."

"She's not?" scouring a burnt pan. "She's never content unless I'm doing something for her. I wouldn't mind if she weren't so argumentative. Oh, I can't get this off—hand me a knife out of that drawer! She challenges everything I say—always trying to put me in the wrong."

"Oh, that's just her way. You get sore at everything," now filling his pipe.

"You can't smoke that when she's here! She can't stand a pipe and doesn't like cigars. She's always complaining about the smoke."

"Is, eh? Well, I smoke in my own home when I darn please!"

"There, you see how you bristle when it affects you? And she doesn't dare say much when you're here—but she's after me all day. Telling me how she used to keep house! Warren, I DO think Carrie might have her this time!"

"Couldn't stay out there if she's goin' to that specialist."

"Carrie could drive her in—only twice a week. We've had her every——"

"Now we've thrashed that all out. Drop it! Well, why d'you get under my feet?" at a hissing protest from Pussy Purr-Mew.

As he strode out, dejectedly Helen resumed her dreary task.

Another half hour before the kitchen was in presentable order.

When she returned to the library, Warren was writing at the desk.

"Dear, I'm so tired. I'm going right to bed. You don't mind, do you? I've such a hard day tomorrow."

"Huh, you make everything hard. It's the way you go at it. Well, you can stop worryin' about Aunt Amelia," taking out an envelope. "I've written she'd better go to a hotel."

"You HAVE?" ecstatically. "Oh, you darling!" hugging him. "How'd you say it? Let me read it!"

"Now look what you did!" elbowing her away. "Give me a blotter!"

As he addressed the envelope, eagerly Helen scanned the brief note:

> "Dear Aunt Amelia:
>
> We're up against the maid problem. Have to fire the one we got and don't know when we'll land another. Think you'll be more comfortable at a hotel.
>
> I'll engage a room and bath at the Astor-Ritz. That's central and near your doctor. Don't worry about the bill—I'll take care of that. You will be our guest.
>
> Phone us when you get in. We'll plan something for Sunday.
>
> Affectionately,
>
> Warren."

"Pay her hotel bill! Why, Warren, you're NOT going to——"

"Why not?" bristling.

"She has plenty of money! Just because she hates to spend it——"

"Now she expected to come here! We can't sidestep without coughin' up for the hotel. Won't be much."

"It won't? If she doesn't have to pay for it —she'll run up an awful bill! All her meals in her room and all kinds of extras! Dear, DON'T send that letter! If you must do something—say you'll pay half. Surely that's enough!"

"Not goin' to piker it to save a few dollars," sealing the envelope with a thump. "Where're your stamps?"

"Then let her come here," desperately. "I'll manage somehow. I'll keep Anna—or do the work myself!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind! Put up such a howl 'bout havin' Aunt Amelia—now I switch her to a hotel you start kickin' about the expense! What's that? Well, what if she does?" savagely. "She's my aunt and I'm doin' the digging. Now this letter GOES! No, you don't—I mail it myself!"

Helen's Indecorous Disposal of Aunt Amelia's Compensatory Gift

"Nothing but circulars," Helen glanced over the morning mail. "Oh, here's a letter from Aunt Amelia!"

"What she got to say? Too soft!" grumbled Warren, scooping out his eggs.

"I hope she hasn't any new ailments," scanning the letter before reading it aloud.

> " 'Dear Warren:
>
> Arrived home all right, but left my umbrella. Would you inquire at the hotel? Black silk with a straight black handle.
>
> My ear seems better. Not so much buzzing. I think the treatments and the change did me good. Thank you for making me so comfortable at the hotel.
>
> As Helen loves antiques, I am sending an old colored print your Uncle John bought when we first married. You can have it framed to suit you—the frame was hard to send. It will look well over that chest in your hall.
>
> Hope you will find the umbrella. My new one—hate to lose it.
>
> With love to you both,
>
> Your Aunt Amelia.' "

"Now I got to scout around for that fool umbrella," growled Warren, knocking the clogged salt-shaker. "Cheaper to buy her one."

"The more you do, the more she expects. It's the dampness—try this one. When you're so busy —to ask you to——"

"Oh, well, I'll just 'phone the hotel. Now I got too much!"

"I don't mind salt—take these," shoving over her unopened eggs. "Oh, this must be that print —I thought it was a magazine."

As Aunt Amelia's presents were always garish atrocities, with dread misgivings Helen slit her fork along the tightly wrapped roll.

A gaudy, crudely colored lithograph. A snow scene—a green sleigh drawing up to a red-and-green house. The family home-coming—with the old folks on the porch. "Thanksgiving" was the caption.

"In the hall! You expect me to hang THIS in the hall?"

"No, that's pretty bad," shrugged Warren.

"Then I don't have to keep it? I can give it away?" remembering past dissensions over Aunt Amelia's unwelcome gifts.

"Don't care what you do with it. Chuck it out!"

"I'd like the old frame for one of my samplers. But she never——"

"Now don't start on Aunt Amelia! What's that? Quarter of?" at chimes from the hall. "Got an appointment at half past," gulping his coffee.

Warren off, while Susie cleared the table, Helen again viewed the print.

This year they had been home only a week when Aunt Amelia's latest ailment necessitated a New York visit. Not settled, and without a maid, Helen had rebelled at having her. So Warren had put her up at a hotel as their guest.

Now, as a compensatory gift, she had sent this hideous print!

In the left-hand corner, in fine old script, was the name of the lithographer.

"Currier & Ives"! That seemed curiously familiar. Currier & Ives——?

Then an illuminating flash. That article in last month's *Country Life!*

An upsetting search of the library table produced the magazine.

"Antique-itis—The Collectors' Epidemic."

Satirizing the craze for everything old, however ugly. The whisky and pickle bottles, and hooked rugs were the writer's special targets.

> "The craze for Currier & Ives prints continues. Recently I sat through a sale at the Anderson Galleries and saw a number of these once cheap lithographs bring incredible prices. "Thanksgiving," after spirited bidding, was knocked down to a collector for five hundred dollars."

Dropping the magazine, with tremulous hands Helen again unrolled the print.

"THANKSGIVING!" Five hundred dollars!

* * * * *

At four o'clock that afternoon Helen stood before a print shop, just off Fifth Avenue.

With timorous indecision she gazed at the sporting prints in the window.

Never before had she approached a shop, except as a purchaser. Now with something to sell—she had not the courage to enter.

Again to the corner and back, rehearsing an opening speech.

Absurd to be so sensitive! Other people sold things—why not she?

Flushed and apologetic, she finally entered the smart, polished-wood shop.

"Good afternoon," the man came forward, politely expectant.

"Do—do you buy old prints?" with deepening color.

"We're not buying much at present," curtness replacing his suavity. "What kind of prints?"

Diffidently she offered the roll. His inspection was without comment.

"What do you want for it?" now keenly appraising her.

"Why, I—I would like to know what it's worth."

"Have you any others? No? And you don't know what you want for this?"

"I think one like it brought five hundred at a sale," she ventured.

"So you know that, do you? Well, that was an absurd price—bid up by two collectors. I'll give you eighty—that's all it's worth."

"Thank you, I'll think about it," retreatingly.

But he did not yield the print. Instead he raised his offer to a hundred. Still Helen demurred.

"No, it belonged to my husband's aunt—perhaps he'd rather keep it."

"You'll make a mistake not to sell it now. The craze for this Currier & Ives stuff is going off." Then after further depreciating arguments, "Well, as I've a customer for it, I'll take it for a hundred and fifty."

"If the same print sold for five hundred—this should be worth three," amazed at her own aggressiveness. "Perhaps I'd better have it sold at auction."

"Yes, and you might not get fifty dollars. I'll make it two hundred," flinging it on the counter with a take-it-or-leave-it flourish.

"Thank you, but I wouldn't care to sell it for less than three hundred," achieving an aloof indifference as she re-rolled the print.

Had she mistaken his eagerness? He was letting her go! Almost at the door now—but her pride would not let her hesitate.

She had the door open before he capitulated.

"All right, I'll give three hundred," gruffly. "Not worth it—but I've a customer who wants it."

Three hundred in crisp tens and twenties safe

in her handbag, Helen, in a flutter of extravagance, took a taxi home.

Half-past five when she reached the apartment.

A glance in the kitchen showed Susie peeling the pineapple—wastefully! But Helen was too affluently joyous to care.

Her new rust-colored crêpe! She would celebrate her opulence by dressing.

"Hello, all dolled up?" when Warren breezed in. "What's on tonight?"

"Nothing. Can't I ever dress just for you?"

"Huh!" skeptically, swinging into his room.

Tell him now? No, better wait until after dinner. This elating news merited his most appreciative mood.

But when he had finished his salad, and started on his pineapple whip, the urge could no longer be repressed.

As always, with theatric instinct, she approached her dénouement circuitously.

"Dear, Aunt Amelia stayed almost two weeks at the hotel, didn't she? Twelve days, wasn't it? You never told me what it cost you."

"No, and I'll not tell you now. Why in blazes d'you dig that up again?"

"I've a real reason for wanting to know," restraining her exultancy.

"Well, you can keep on wantin'. Now no more harpin' on that!"

"Very well then," elaborately casual, "I'll keep all the three hundred myself."

"Three hundred what? What the Sam Hill you drivin' at?"

"Three hundred dollars! That's what I got for that print she sent us."

"Eh?" glaring at her. "What's the idea?"

"I sold it to a dealer for three hundred dollars," with climactic effect.

"The hell you did!"

"If you don't believe me I'll show you the money."

Into her room and back with her purse, bulging with crisp new notes.

"What're you tryin' to put over? You never sold that old eyesore for any three hundred!"

"That 'old eyesore' was a Currier & Ives print. One just like it sold at Anderson's for five hundred. I remembered reading about it—and looked it up."

"Who'd you trim? Who was fool enough to cough up three hundred for that?"

"A print dealer—here's his card. I wish now I'd asked more."

"Huh, you fleeced him plenty. Three hundred bones for that old chromo! What 'bout Aunt Amelia? She didn't know it was worth anything like that."

"Of course not! If she had, she'd never have sent it to us."

"Well, what're you goin' to do about it? Split with her?"

"Why, she gave it to us—she's given us enough awful things! And after you had her at that ex-

pensive hotel for twelve days—and paid all the bills! Now don't say we can't keep it?"

"Seems a tricky thing to do," jerking his napkin from Pussy Purr-Mew's playful claws. "She didn't give it to us to sell."

"You said 'chuck it out'! Now, Warren, you're NOT going to take any absurd attitude about this? Surely we've done enough for Aunt Amelia! After all her visits and impositions——"

"Oh, all right, have it your own way," with a dismissing shrug.

"But, dear, I don't want it all! You take out her hotel bill—and with the rest I'll get a Pembroke table for the hall."

"Well, the bill was only a hundred and seventy—so we're a hundred and thirty to the good. But you pulled that off—I'm not in on it. Go ahead and blow it all!"

"But, dear, I'm not going to get anything for myself—just for the house."

"Don't care what you get! It's a dubious deal—and I'll have nothing to do with it. But Aunt Amelia's got a long credit now! Next time she gets her teeth or glasses changed—she stays here long as she wants. And there're to be no flare-ups from you! You're to make her comfortable—and keep a cheerful mug. Now just remember that!"

Helen's Quixotic Impulse Finds a Staunch and Unexpected Champion

It was a dingy hardware shop in a shabby side street. A dusty assortment of tools and crockery cluttered the window.

But the group of children were not staring at the tools nor the enameled saucepans marked "49c." It was at something small, moving—wretchedly ALIVE!

Above a wire trap was a red-lettered sign,

THE IRON CAT
Sanitary Mouse-Catcher
Best on the Market

In the trap, as a further advertisement, were two tiny, emaciated mice.

Helen would have passed the window comfortably unconscious of its wretched prisoners had not a grimy urchin shrilled out:

"Look! Its nose's bleedin'!"

Horrified, Helen stopped.

The captive mice, crawling ceaselessly back and forth, pressed their bruised noses against the cruel bars. One, even weaker and more emaciated than the other, seemed to look at Helen in piteous mute appeal.

"Oh, how cruel! How cruel!"

The children glanced up at her indignant outburst, but there was no sympathy in their eyes, only a morbid curiosity.

It was after five—hardly time to get home and dress before dinner. And Warren was bringing Mr. Jones! But she could not ignore the appeal of those helpless mice.

The indignant color scorching her face, she rushed in to the store.

A man with stubby gray hair and mustache was tying up some curtain rods.

"Those mice!" flamed Helen. "Those wretched little mice in that trap! How CAN you keep them there?"

"What's that to you?" insolently, as he laid out some screws for the curtain fixtures. "Ain't your mice, are they?"

"Oh, but it's cruel to keep them there without food or water!"

"What of it? What's a couple o' mice? That's what traps is for, ain't they?"

"You can drown them—but to keep them in that window for an advertisement! You've no right to make anything suffer!" almost in tears. "I belong to three animal societies. I'll——"

"Go ahead! Report all you want. Nobody's goin's to bother about a few mice. Ha'past five now, I'm closin' up."

"No, no, you can't keep them there another night! I'll buy them," opening her purse. "I'll

give a dollar a piece." Then, at his sneer, "Five dollars!"

"Don't want your money and don't want you tellin' me my business!"

"I'll get a policeman. I'll have you arrested for cruelty to animals!"

He was at the door now, holding it open as he menacingly waved her out.

Helen flew down the street—three blocks before she found an officer.

"I'm directin' the traffic," to her breathless appeal. "I can't leave for a couple o' mice." Then, more kindly, "Call up the Animal Society."

"He'll be gone before they get there. It means another long night of torture, without food or water, for those wretched little things!"

"Sorry, ma'am, I can't do nothin'," dismissingly turning his back.

Five after six! A clock in a dairy lunch brought a panicky realization of the time.

"Quick as you can, please!" to the driver as she halted a taxi.

In the cab, she could no longer keep back the brimming tears. She tried to reason—to tell herself it was foolish and useless to get so worked up.

Then, suddenly, she realized it was Saturday! Those suffering, helpless mice would be there without food or water until Monday!

It was twenty minutes after six when the taxi drew up at the apartment.

The elevator was starting up as she entered the hall, but her excited ring brought it back.

Stepping in, she confronted Warren and Mr. Jones!

Under the strong lights of the white-mirrored car, she was painfully conscious of her reddened eyes and tear-stained face.

"What's wrong?" was Warren's abrupt greeting. "What's happened?"

"I—I'll tell you when we get in. I'm sorry, Mr. Jones, I'm so late."

"I hope nothing's happened to distress you?" solicitously.

"Oh, it was so cruel! Two wretched little mice in a shop window—shut up without food or water, to advertise a trap! But you'll only laugh at me," with passionate rebellion, "you'll say they're just mice!"

"I'll not," Mr. Jones broke in quickly. "Where is this place?"

Grateful for his sympathy, Helen, half sobbing, told of the pitiful condition of the mice, and her frantic, futile efforts to release them.

"No sense getting all worked up about it now!" scowled Warren, trying to check her emotionalism before his guest. "If the place's shut up, nothing can be done until Monday. I'll dust around there then."

"All that time without water! And the hot sun on that window tomorrow!"

"Well, I've brought H. V. to dinner," sharply. "Cheerful reception you're handing him!"

"Oh, I know, I'm sorry. I'll see to dinner right away."

"Don't hurry, Mrs. Curtis. There's something I forgot at the hotel. I'll have to get a note off. Curtis, will you 'phone for a messenger?"

As Mr. Jones sat down at the desk, Helen, thankful for the note that would help bridge the wait for dinner, rushed out to inspect the table.

"I've got everything ready but the sauce for the artichokes," announced Susie. "I didn't know whether you wanted melted butter or Hollandaise."

"Melted butter will do. I wanted to fix that myself but I was detained. This candle's broken—get another, and these napkins don't match the cloth."

In her own room, with a flurried haste, she slipped into a dinner gown.

At the table she was grateful for the shaded candles, for in spite of cold water and powder, her face was still tear flushed.

The *hors d'œuvre*, the tomato bisque soup, and broiled sweetbreads were delicious, but Helen could hardly swallow past the lump in her throat.

She could feel Warren's stern displeasure. Later he would fume out at her for her "maudlin sympathy" and for making a "scene."

While they talked of the Western newspapers that Mr. Jones controlled, Helen could think only of the starved, thirst-tortured mice. Must they beat their bruised bodies against those wires until Monday morning?

Did Nature provide no humane anæsthetic? Was there no merciful limit to what a helpless animal could be made to suffer?

"Mustn't let it affect your appetite, Mrs. Curtis," sympathized Mr. Jones.

"Oh, I had a very late lunch," resorting to that ever convenient lie.

"Helen's dippy about animals," shrugged Warren. "She's forever picking up tramp cats and dogs. That's all right—but I draw the line at mice."

"They suffer just the same! If they must be killed, catch them in some humane way and drown them. But to torture them needlessly——"

"Now, don't start on that again," sternly. Then, to Mr. Jones, "What about the Associated Press Service? Your contract cover all your papers?"

The discussion of News Services and Syndicates lasted through the dinner.

They were having coffee in the library when Susie announced:

"Man at the door to see Mr. Jones!"

"Yes, my chauffeur. I sent for him."

At this, Susie ushered in a sturdy youth, carrying a small square package.

"Have any trouble, Barker?"

"Not much, sir."

"Good! That's fine! You needn't wait." Then turning to Helen, "Mrs. Curtis, this is something for you."

"For me?" wonderingly, as he carefully removed the paper.

With the first glimpse of black enameled wires, Helen KNEW!

"For the love of Lulu!" gasped Warren, as the paper fell from the mouse trap, exposing its pitiful captives. "How in blazes did you pull that off?"

"When Mrs. Curtis mentioned the address, I'd a hunch the man lived over the shop, so I sent that note to Barker. Told him to bully, bribe—to get those mice anyway, but to GET 'EM!"

"Well, I'll be blowed! You newspaper men know how to put a thing over. Hold on," as Helen started out with the trap. "What're you going to do? Drown 'em? Here, I'll do it. You'll get all upset."

"No, no, they've suffered enough. I'm going to put food and water on the pantry floor—and let them out!"

"Let me help you." Mr. Jones took the trap from her. "Poor little devils! So weak they can hardly crawl."

At any other time Helen would have been disconcerted at so prominent a man pottering around in her pantry. But now, intent only on her humane purpose, she placed water and crumbs under the sink while Mr. Jones gently opened the trap.

Then they stood back and watched.

For several moments the mice huddled against the bars, their wee, thin bodies still palpitating with fear.

Then, thirst driven, they crawled out on the edge of the saucer.

"Sh-sh," whispered Helen, as Warren swung in from the dining-room. "Don't frighten them. Come, let's leave them alone."

"Of all the fool stunts!" he grunted, as they went back to the library. "Fatten 'em up for Pussy Purr-Mew?"

"Oh—oh, I forgot about her!" excitedly. "Where is she?"

"I shut her in your room. Better keep her there until your pets make a getaway. But you two are bum sentimentalists. What's to prevent that man from putting another pair in his shop window?"

"They won't stay there long," grinned Mr. Jones. "If the Humane Society can't do anything, we'll get the newspapers after him. I'll have that brute so written up—we'll run him out of business! How about that, Mrs. Curtis?"

Forgetful of everything but their common love for animals, Helen glowed a rapturous:

"Oh, I'd like to HUG you!"

And he twinkled back a jovial:

"You may!"

Family Greed Intrudes upon the Equitable Division of Aunt Sarah's Effects

"Dear, there're only three things I really want —the hall clock, the sewing-table upstairs, and that small Kashmir rug in the back parlor."

"I don't know about that sewing-table," Warren steered her over a muddy crossing. "Think Carrie said something about wanting that."

"She has one!" protested Helen. "It's just because she knows I want it."

"Now, if you two get to scrapping—I'll send the whole lot to auction!"

"But Carrie has so much room! She can take some of the big things."

"Well, here we are," turning up the steps of an old brownstone house.

It had been three months since Warren's Great-Aunt Sarah had died. He was one of the executors, and her will stipulated that he and his sister Carrie should select what articles they desired, before her household effects were sold at auction for the benefit of an Old Ladies' Home.

Knowing Carrie's proclivity for getting the best of everything, Helen was wondering just how their selections would be made.

"Dear, don't you think the fairest way would be to choose in turns?"

"Any way'll suit me. Good afternoon, Mary,"

as an elderly maid, who had been with Aunt Sarah for years, opened the door. "Has Mrs. Edwards come yet?"

"Yes, Miss Carrie was here this mornin' goin' over the house," ushering them into the long gloomy parlor. "Said she'd be back at four to meet you."

Helen had not been in the house since the funeral, and now shudderingly she glanced into the back parlor where Aunt Sarah had lain in state. The air seemed still heavy with the flowers that had covered the coffin.

"One of us'll have to take those family portraits," announced Warren.

"Dear, we can't! Where could we hang them?"

"Well, if Carrie won't, we'll have to. We can't let 'em go to auction."

Old oil portraits would have been welcome, but these were horrible crayon liknesses of Aunt Sarah and Uncle John in ornate gilt and velvet frames.

Everything in that long dismal front-parlor was impossible—neither antique nor modern. The walnut parlor suite, nailed-down carpet, and "Rogers Group" on its onyx stand, were all of the hideous mid-Victorian period.

The top of an ebony piano and a corner "what-not" were littered with "cabinet" photographs, a plush album, gilded horseshoe, hand-painted plaque of water-lilies, shell boxes, and other atrocious bric-a-brac.

The furnishings in the back parlor were even more hopeless. The mantel, with its ball-fringed lambrequin, held some wax flowers under glass, a painted conch-shell, and a large photograph of Aunt Sarah and Uncle John, taken on their wedding trip and framed with gilded pine cones.

Over the mantel hung the inspirational motto "No Cross—No Crown." By the grate was a china spittoon wreathed with moss-roses.

Flanking the center marble-top table were two large "spring" rockers, their plush backs and arms protected by crocheted "tidies."

"Dear, there isn't a THING here we can use," murmured Helen.

"Yes, it's pretty bad. Won't bring enough at auction to pay to move it."

Helen thought of the "Bad Taste" exhibition held last winter by a group of humorously-inclined artists—"Horrors of the Awful Eighties" they had called it. But it had been no worse than this.

Though she had hardly known this austere, recluse great-aunt of Warren's, yet her sense of respect restrained her critical comments.

The dining-room was laid with the same Brussels carpet of cabbage-rose design that covered both the front and back parlors.

On the cumbersome black walnut sideboard were a "castor," a ponderous silver-plated water set with a swinging pitcher, and a glass cake stand. Fish, game, and fruit pictures in ornate frames adorned the walls.

"Here's some good table-linen," Helen had opened the lower part of the sideboard. "We could use that. And the bed-linen—there ought to be some fine old linen sheets. Let's go upstairs now —there's nothing down here."

Up the carpeted, brass-rodded steps, and they entered the large "spare" room.

"Oh, I'd love to have this quilt," Helen smoothed the patch-work quilt on the heavy walnut bed. "And here's that sewing-table—I DO want this!"

The Colonial mahogany sewing-table, with its simple dignified lines, seemed to shrink from the surrounding atrocities of the later Victorian period.

But the crowning monstrosity stood on a jardinière-stand in the corner.

When Helen had first seen it, on her one duty call on Aunt Sarah, she had been almost convulsed. Even now there came an irrepressible giggle.

"Yes, that's pretty awful," grinned Warren.

It was a bronze Venus de Milo, the familiar half-draped, armless figure, but with the astounding addition of a small round nickel clock in the exact center of her nude abdomen!

"Dear, that's the funniest thing I've ever seen!"

"Guess we'll have to smash that! We can't let that come up at auction. Here's Carrie, now!"

"Am I late?" Warren's sister breezed in. "I stopped at the cleaner's. Have you been through downstairs? Did you make a list of what you wanted?"

"I didn't know we should," Helen had a disquieting premonition of Carrie's plan.

"Well, these four things are all I want. I've jotted them down, for I have to run along—some errands to do before I go out on the 5:40."

With heightened color, Helen glanced at the four items on Carrie's list:

Hall clock
Sewing-table
Kashmir rug in back parlor
Table and bed linen

"Huh," was Warren's grunted comment, "you're a good picker, Carrie!"

"Well, if that's all I want and I'm willing for you to have everything else in the house—surely that's fair."

"You know those are the only things either of us want," flushed Helen. "The only fair way is to take turns in choosing."

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, Helen, but you weren't even mentioned in Aunt Sarah's will—just Warren and I."

"Now if there's any scrapping," broke in Warren sternly, "I'll send the whole lot to auction—and you can buy in what you want."

"When we can have them for nothing?" shrilled Carrie.

"Then take turns in choosing. Helen's dead right about that."

"Oh, very well, if you're so insistent about it—

but it seems so silly." Then, with covetous haste, "I'll take the sewing-table."

"All right," Warren noted it down on an envelope. "Now Helen?"

"The hall clock," resenting Carrie's calm appropriation of first choice.

"That grandfather's clock! Where on earth will you put it?" demanded Carrie. "No room in your hall—and it's exactly what I want for mine."

"Then I'm perfectly willing to take the sewing-table instead."

"But I want that for my guest-room. Aunt Sarah would want me——"

"This isn't getting us anywhere," scowled Warren. "Make your choice and stick to it. Now, go ahead—you have the table and we have the clock."

"But you haven't any place to put the clock!" contended his sister.

"You needn't worry about that. Let's get on with this. What's next?"

"I'll take the bed and table linen!" tartly.

"Why, Carrie, I don't think those ought to go together," protested Helen.

"Oh, let it go," shrugged Warren. "Fire away, Helen."

"That Kashmir rug in the back-parlor—there isn't much choice now."

"Sorry, but Aunt Sarah practically gave me that rug long ago."

"You're laying it on pretty thick, Carrie," grunted Warren.

"But Helen's purposely asking for the things on my list!"

"That isn't true! Warren, weren't those the very things I selected?"

"Now, you'll not drag me into this. It's disgraceful the way you two are rowing over Aunt Sarah's things. Give Carrie the rug if she wants to hog it. What d'you want instead?"

"I suppose that quilt on the spare-room bed," resignedly.

"Why, that goes with the bed-linen," exclaimed Carrie, sharply.

"Bed-linen means just sheets and pillow-cases. But take the quilt, and anything else you want!" flared Helen. "I'm quite through!"

"Now, see here," cut in Warren. "What I want to know is—who's going to take those family portraits in the parlor?"

"Those awful crayons? Not ME!" snapped Carrie, emphatically.

"Look here, we can't let them go to auction. Let's take one apiece."

"You can take both of them. Helen's so crazy about ancestral portraits that she bought one and it turned out to be Benjamin Franklin!" laughed his sister maliciously. "Here you can have two bona-fide ones for nothing."

"All right, we'll take 'em," muttered Warren, grimly. "We'll hang 'em somewhere—in the maid's room if we can't find any other place."

"Hard enough to keep a maid without inflicting

on her those montrosities," shrugged Carrie. "Well, I must hurry," glancing at her wrist watch.

"Hold on, if we take the portraits, you've got to take that album and those family photographs."

"Clutter up my house with that junk? Really, Warren, you're asking too much. Now, I MUST go! Tell Mary to have my things ready—I'll come in Monday and take them home in the car," as she ran down the stairs.

"And you say Carrie isn't selfish!" flamed Helen, when the front door banged.

"She certainly put it over this time. But she paid more attention to Aunt Sarah than we ever did—guess she thought she had more claim."

"You're always trying to excuse her!"

"Well, I wasn't going to scrap over a few old hand-me-downs. Come on, we're through here," Warren started downstairs. "Let's get on home."

Out in the soft spring dusk, Helen, with hot resentment, brooded over her sister-in-law's greed. To insist on the sewing-table when she had one—and to take that quilt with the bed linen! And the way she had claimed that rug!

"Glad that job's over," grunted Warren. "I've been dreading it. Now, there's one thing certain—when we cash in there'll be no rowing over our junk. Everything goes to auction. Let 'em bid for it! That'll put the kibosh on any of 'em that want to hog the whole show. That's the only way to squelch these rotten family squabbles!"

Warren is Caustically Unsympathetic Over His Sister's Tragic Loss

"Bobbie, you mustn't do that! You'll ruin Aunt Helen's nice floor. It's just been waxed. Now look at those marks!"

With impish defiance Bobbie took a final running slide—his heels leaving disfiguring streaks on the polished floor.

"Why don't you play with your crayons?" persisted Helen. "I thought you were going to draw me a house."

"I'm hungry! When you goin' to have dinner?" scrambling up on the piano bench.

"In just a little while, now. But it's not dinner—we have supper Sunday evenings."

"Here, can that racket!" Warren glowered over his paper as Bobbie ran a pencil along the piano keys. "Where's Carrie? Why don't she look after this youngster?"

"She has a headache—she went in my room to lie down."

Wearily Helen stooped to gather up the scattered crayons. One had been stepped on and ground into the rug.

All day she had been picking up after Bobbie. How she dreaded these Sunday visits of Warren's sister and her incorrigible child!

"Helen, didn't you find something of mine in the

bathroom?" Carrie, flushed and flustered, appeared at the door.

"Why no, what was it? Not your rings?"

"No, it—something else I left on the washstand. Maybe Nora found it—I'll ask her," hurrying out to the kitchen.

"What'd she lose?" Warren reached for another paper.

"She didn't say," Helen was turning down the rugs Bobbie had kicked up.

A moment later Carrie dashed back, her anxiety unabated.

"Bobbie, have you been in the bathroom? Did you see anything that belonged to Mother on the washstand?"

"I ain't seen nothing," trying to dislodge Pussy Purr-Mew from her refuge under the couch.

"What'd you lose?" demanded Warren. "Why all the mystery?"

"Well, it's—it's my bridge, if you must know!" reddening.

"Your bridge?"

"My removable bridge. It hurt me so, I took it out before I lay down."

"Oh, your false teeth," he grinned. "Why in blazes didn't you say so?"

"They're no more false than that bridge you have," bristled his sister. "But they're more sanitary. I can take them out and wash them—just two teeth with a gold band. I'm positive I left them in the bathroom!"

"Well, we haven't swiped 'em. I'm pretty well satisfied with the kind that stays in."

"You needn't joke about it," hotly. "They cost sixty dollars and now if they've been knocked off and broken——"

"Where'd you have 'em last? Maybe you sneezed 'em out."

"You sure you left them in the bathroom?" asked Helen, ignoring Warren's irrelevancy. "Maybe you laid them on the dresser. Wait, I'll come help you look."

But a thorough search of Helen's room and the bath failed to reveal Carrie's missing teeth.

"You sure you had them? You know they don't show unless you laugh—you might have left them at home."

"I might—but I didn't!" snapped Carrie. "Don't you suppose I know whether I had them or not? They hurt me in the car as we drove in. Heavens, the dust back of this dresser! Don't you ever move it out?"

"Not every week," flushed Helen. "One of the legs is wobbly."

"That's your antique furniture—always coming to pieces! Thank goodness, I haven't the craze for such junk—wouldn't have it as a gracious gift!"

"Well, Carrie, criticizing my furniture won't help find your teeth. Did you take them out before you lay down? Could they be anywhere about this couch?"

"You can look," ungraciously. "But I KNOW I left them in the bathroom!"

"What's happened now?" dismayed Helen at the sudden turmoil from the library.

"Look what that brat did!" roared Warren as they rushed in.

"Aunt Helen said draw a picture of a house," whimpered Bobbie.

On the white enameled baseboard was a blue-crayoned house, the red chimney and black curling smoke extending up on the wall paper.

"The woodwork can be washed—but it'll never come off the paper," wailed Helen.

"Nonsense! Just rub it with a piece of bread," instructed Carrie. "I took it off our dining-room that way."

"If you'd given him a good thrashing then," exploded Warren, "he wouldn't have done it again."

"He didn't mean to be naughty, did you, Precious?" defended his mother, straightening his sailor collar. "His Aunt Helen told him to draw a house."

Returning from the pantry with a piece of bread, Helen anxiously attempted to erase the chimney. Only part of it came off, leaving an ugly smudge.

"That'll never be seen," shrugged Carrie. "Just move the couch a little—that'll hide it."

"Carrie, I think the least you can do when you bring Bobbie here, is to keep him from being destructive."

"What do you expect from a child of his age?

They have to give expression to their creative impulses."

"Creative impulses!" snorted Warren. "I'll express some of my impulses in a minute. Express 'em with a slipper where they'll do the most good!"

"Well, that wall paper isn't as important as my teeth! You don't seem to realize they cost sixty dollars—besides all the bother of having them fitted. All you're thinking about is that spot on your wall!"

"Supper's ready," announced Nora from the doorway.

"Got any jelly cake?" Bobbie scampered ahead to the dining-room.

"I'm not going to eat now," objected Carrie. "I'll have another look first."

"You come eat your supper," scowled Warren, always impatient at having a meal delayed. "You can look afterwards."

"One can't lay a thing down here that it doesn't vanish. Last time I lost my fountain pen—and never did find it."

"Well, nobody's going to snitch your false teeth, Carrie. We're all supplied with the kind that stay in. Ha-ha, even Pussy Purr-Mew can prove an alibi," as a pink-mouthed yawn exposed a full set of feline teeth.

"That's right—make all the cynical remarks you can. If I must have bridged teeth, I prefer to have them sanitary—so I can take them out and clean them."

"What if you should swallow 'em? Be a pretty expensive meal. What d'you do with 'em at night? Put 'em in a glass of water by the bed? Well, if it's all the same to you, I'd rather have my sixty dollars anchored in."

"We'll look again after supper," propitiated Helen, as Carrie, glaring at her brother, flung into her chair at the table. "I don't like to make Nora late—she wants to get off this evening."

"I suppose Nora's getting off is more important than anything else," was Carrie's acid remark as she shook out her napkin.

"What's them?" demanded Bobbie.

"Tomato preserves." Helen adjusted the tray cloth under his plate. "But you must have your bread and milk first."

"No, not that piece," objected Carrie sharply, as Warren helped her to the cold ham. "You know I never eat any fat. No, Bobbie, you can't have that now. Here, let Mother butter your bread."

The air charged with discord, the excellence of the cold ham, salad, and hot tea biscuits was unappreciated.

"Oh, Bobbie, don't wipe your hands on the nice clean tablecloth. Oh, what dirty hands! You should never come to the table without washing."

"Helen, you're always nagging at him," resented Carrie. "You don't give him a minute's peace. There's nothing so bad for a child as to be continually hounded with 'Don't do this,' and 'Don't do that'."

"Huh, if he's a specimen of the right way to raise a child—deliver me! Now see here, young man, you march yourself out and scrub those hands!" ordered Warren. "Use soap. No, don't you go with him," as Carrie started up. "Let him wait on himself. When I was his age——"

"Yes, you were a model child, weren't you?" sniffed his sister.

"When I wasn't I got a good walloping. That's what he needs!"

Sullenly Bobbie squirmed down from his chair and trudged into the bathroom.

Helen listened, vaguely uneasy. She was never certain of what mischief Bobbie might get into if left alone.

"Look! Look what I found!" He dashed back holding up a towel.

"Oh, my—my teeth!" gasped Carrie, snatching the towel. "I left them on the washstand—and they caught on this fringe!"

"Might've caught on anything," growled Warren. "Why the Sam Hill don't you have 'em fastened in your head. Then you know where they are. You're too blamed careless to have detachable teeth. Now stick 'em in—and come finish your supper."

"I don't see anything humorous about it," glared Carrie. "It's very poor taste to make a joke of everything," flouncing into the bathroom to replace her dental accessories.

"Dear, don't tease her—don't say anything more," urged Helen. "She's furious already."

But when his sister swished haughtily back to the table, her flushed face freshly powdered, Warren sliced another wedge of ham which he deposited on her plate.

"Now you've got your full set of grinders—guess you can make away with that. But you take my tip and have 'em riveted in! May not be so sanitary, but it's a darn sight safer. You won't be losing 'em all over the place—keeping the whole family in an uproar hunting for your blooming molars!"

Warren's Silk Hat Falls a Victim to Helen's Insatiable Economy

With an ever-convenient hairpin, Helen opened the last number of her favorite home monthly.

Ignoring the insipid pretty-girl cover, she scanned the illustrations of "His Butterfly Wife," the new three-part saccharine serial. Then on to "What Fashion Dictates," demonstrated by two pages of slim hipless figures.

Hastily glancing through "The Home Decorator," "Wholesome and Economical Dishes," and "Easy Desserts for the Young Housewife," Helen turned eagerly to the last department, "Economical Hints for the Home."

The suggestions this month were most alluring. "A New Use for Old Hot Water Bags," "Your Burnt-out Electric Light Bulbs Make Excellent Darning Balls," "Save Your Used Phonograph Needles to Clean Bottles."

It was the last item that interested Helen most:

> "Your husband's old silk hat will make a beautiful handbag. Great care must be taken in removing the material. It is pasted over the block and must be pulled off gently without tearing. Just the shape for a bag, it needs only to be lined and mounted."

"Dear, just a moment, do listen to this," reading it aloud.

"Um-um," grunted Warren, without looking up from the bank book he was balancing.

"You bought that new silk hat in London—you'll never wear your old one. Can't I——"

"Go ahead, I don't want it," curtly. "Thought you'd given it away."

"I didn't know anyone to give it to. The elevator boy doesn't need a silk hat. It'll make a wonderful bag! I'll get it down right now."

A rainy evening with Warren working on his books was an ideal time for just such a homey task.

Not daring to disturb him to get down the hat, Helen dragged the stepladder chair to the hall closet. Even then the top shelf was beyond her reach, but with his cane she poked down the high round box.

Yes, it WOULD make a wonderful bag! Exultantly she held up the gleaming silk hat. That satiny plush was the finest texture.

"Dear, it looks so new—it seems a pity to cut it up," smoothing the glossy surface as she ran into the library.

"No use to me," scowling over a line of figures. "What do I want with two silk hats?"

"It's awfully good-looking on you," playfully setting it on his head. "You look like Lord Somebody in an English play," viewing him admiringly.

"Here, stop your monkeying! Get busy and don't bother me."

Bringing in her sewing basket, Helen settled by the library table. But even with the scissors in her hand, she hesitated to cut into that lustrous, expensive hat.

Why had he bought another when this looked so new? But he wore a high hat so little, the shape went out of style.

Compared to the mercurial changes in feminine millinery, men's hats were most stable. Yet as Warren had had this before they were married, it must be *passé* now.

Determinedly she thrust her scissors under the band. It was not gros-grain ribbon as on a derby. It was broadcloth—a band of dull-finished broadcloth to bring out the sheen of the hat.

"It does seem a shame!" her scissors still poised. "I wonder if there isn't someone we could give it to?"

An impatient snort from Warren overcame her reluctance. Ruthlessly, she ripped off the broadcloth band.

"There, you can have that to play with!" draping it around Pussy Purr-Mew, who sat on the table gravely watching the work of demolition.

Next, the scissors pried up the edge of the fine silk plush. Firmly pasted over the block, it took half an hour to peel it off.

"Look, dear! I got it all off without tearing it once. See, it's just the shape of a bag. And this white satin isn't a bit soiled!" examining the inside

of the now denuded hat. "I'm going to use that for the lining."

"Sixty-three, seventy-one, eighty, eighty-seven," Warren, adding aloud, sternly rebuked her interruption.

Ripping out the inner band, its faint leather odor and perforated initials, "W. E. C.," brought back a thrilled memory.

It was the first time he had called to take her to the theater. In love with him even then, as he waited in the drawing-room, she had paused at the hall table to flutter over his hat with its impressive initials. She had even sniffed at the leather band and at the cigary fragrance of his gloves.

The band now ripped out, she gazed at it wistfully. It was such soft, lovely leather—perhaps she could use it for something.

Next came the white satin lining with the gilt-lettered name and crest of the maker. Helen was fascinated by that expensive-looking crest. It would add distinctiveness to the lining of her bag.

"I've got it now," exploded Warren. "Had $27 too much. Been over the blamed thing three times and couldn't find it—a check here I hadn't deducted."

"Now, can you look?" eagerly. "See how wonderfully this is coming out! And that silver top on my old bead bag—I think it'll just fit."

"Fine!" in genial, good humor, since he had located his error. "Having the time of your life, eh?"

"Yes, I love to do anything like this. Oh, do look at Pussy Purr-Mew! She's too cunning for words."

Curled up inside the devastated hat, Pussy Purr-Mew gazed blandly out at them, awaiting their admiring attention.

The lining finally sewed in, Helen got out the silver top.

A moment's anxious suspense as she measured it. Exactly the right size. The bag was going to be a great success.

With her passion for utilizing old things, Helen was purringly happy. Nothing brought her greater joy than to find a use for something that would otherwise be thrown away.

She had three old pillow cases filled with odds and ends of trimmings, lace and ribbons. Junk, Warren called it. Yet she loved to rummage through them and think how some day she could use this or that.

But to make a handbag out of Warren's old silk hat was so far her supreme achievement; also it suggested a new line of economic possibilities.

His wardrobe had been overlooked as a source of supply for make-overs. Why could not his old derbies be used for something?

But her usual inventiveness failed her. She could think of nothing into which a derby could be converted. The shape was bafflingly inadaptable.

"Look, dear, it's finished," triumphantly. "Didn't I do that quick?"

"Um-um."

"Now, DO stop long enough to look at it! Wasn't that a clever idea?"

"Looks all right," giving it a grudging glance.

"You couldn't buy one like it for any price," with glowing elation. "They'd never put that quality of plush in a bag."

"Yep, that's a good stunt. Fine way to use up the old lid," impatient to get back to his work.

"And you're always poking fun at these economy hints in that magazine. You see how practical this was? It more than pays for a year's subscription."

"Huh, bet that's the first sensible thing you ever got out of it. What was that you read the other day—'How to Make a Card Case Out of a Sardine Can'?"

"You know it wasn't."

"Well, almost as bad." Then with a grin, "Gild Your Husband's Cigar Butts," as he tossed one into the tray, "And Make a Nobby Picture Frame."

"Wasn't I lucky—this top just fits?" her enthusiasm ignoring his scoffing humor. "And I love this gold stamp in the lining. Look, dear, 'By Royal Appointment to H. M. the King'."

"Eh? What's that?" explosively.

"Why, I used the white satin lining and this was in the top," showing him the stamp, "Hunt, Grimm & Co."

"Hunt, Grimm & Co.," shouted Warren. "What the hell have you done?"

Jumping up, he snatched the denuded frame

from the table, tumbling out the indignant Pussy Purr-Mew.

"You monumental idiot! You brainless, turnip-headed chump! You—you——" in spluttering incoherency. "Know what you've done?"

A dread, sick fear engulfing her, Helen gazed at him dumbly.

"That's the NEW hat I bought in London last trip."

"No, no! It CAN'T be!" quaveringly. "It was way on the top shelf."

"Then you put it there," he roared. "I bought this hat you've carved up at Hunt-Grimm's last year," shaking at her the grotesque naked block.

Dashing into his closet, Helen dragged out his leather hat box.

With trembling fingers she unbuckled the straps. The lid thrown back revealed the hat luxuriously embedded in the red velvet lining.

Her throat tightened as she lifted it out. It was the OLD hat! The importer's label and the slightly soiled headband confirmed it.

In some incomprehensible way the hats had been put in the wrong boxes.

"One of your damned ideas of economy," thundered Warren. "Want to know what that little stunt will cost? You know what I'll have to pay for a hat like that on Fifth Avenue?"

But Helen had dropped on the floor by the leather case in a huddled, tearful heap.

"What'll you do next—make a sofa pillow out

of my dinner coat? Wonder that blooming magazine hasn't told you to use my silk muffler for a dish rag—and save ten cents."

Helen was sobbing her abject hysterical contrition.

"There, take your damned bag!" as he flung it on the floor beside her. "And your fool magazine, too," flinging it after the bag. "Maybe you can dig out some more economy stunts. But you keep 'em for your own duds—you leave MINE alone! Don't you ever touch a shoestring that belongs to me!"

Divers Domestic Discords Contribute to Warren's Sunday-Morning Grouch

Sunday! The luxury of not having to get up!

Turning her face from the window, Helen snuggled deeper into the pillow.

But on this coveted, extra Sunday-morning hour, she found herself perversely wakeful.

"What time is it?" Warren stirred and yawned.

"Dear, it's Sunday. We don't have to get up yet."

"Pull down that shade! Right in my eyes."

Drawing down the darkening shade, Helen cuddled back into bed.

The clock ticked off the precious moments, but still she could not sleep. Perhaps she had too much cover. It had grown warmer in the night. Sitting up, she flung back the pink silk comforter.

Again settling down, tense with a disquieting consciousness of rare moments wasted, the more determinedly she sought sleep, the more wakeful she grew.

The lowered shade was now flapping against the open window. Must she get up again to fix it? Or was it only a momentary breeze?

"Fix that confounded shade!" growled Warren.

Up again, she vainly tried to anchor the shade so it would not rattle. Finally, two pins driven in with the back of a hairbrush seemed to hold it.

By this time she was so nervously awake that sleep was impossible. But she slipped back into bed, hoping Warren could sleep.

Gazing at his tousled head above the hunched-up covers, she wondered why on week-day mornings she was dead for sleep, and yet on Sundays so obdurately wakeful.

Again the tapping of the shade. The wind had loosened the pins.

With an irate grunt, Warren was out of bed.

"Guess that'll do it," as he slammed down the window.

"Dear, we can't sleep now, anyway. We might as well get up."

"Now you're not going to roust me out Sunday morning," flopping back into bed. "Here's where I get a little extra sleep."

Tucking the covers about him, Helen stole into her own room to dress.

Her evening gown, slippers, and lingerie strewn about proclaimed the lateness of their getting home last night.

A dull headache was an added reminder of the Daltons' after-theater supper.

Helen dressed, straightened her room, took her bending exercises, and then went out to the kitchen.

Susie, always sullen on Sunday mornings because of the uncertainty of the breakfast hour, hastily put down the comic sheet and greeted her with a surly,

"He didn't bring no cream."

"No cream? And there's none left?" opening the ice-box.

Under Susie's régime there was never any cream left. The question had been merely perfunctory.

"Plenty of milk," now cutting the grapefruit with defiant vigor.

"You know Mr. Curtis doesn't like milk in his coffee. And Sunday morning, too—when he has time for a good breakfast. Give him the top of the bottle. Skim it off carefully in that small pitcher —just for him."

"Can I put my muffins in now?" Susie was digging the seeds from the grapefruit.

"No, Mr. Curtis isn't up yet. I'll tell you when. And don't bake them too fast. Lay a paper over them, so they won't burn on top."

Leaving the comic section for Susie's edification, Helen took the rest of the bulky Sunday issue into the library.

"Where in blazes's that shaving cream I got the other day?" shouted Warren.

"Dear, I thought you were going back to sleep," hurrying to the bathroom, where he was fumbling in the crowded medicine chest. "There it is—top shelf."

"Who's been using it?" glowering at the dented tube.

"I did yesterday—to wash my hair. I was all out of shampoo."

"I like your nerve," lathering his brush. "Using my shaving cream to wash your mop."

"Dear, I'll go tell Susie you're up. Do you want an omelet this morning?"

"No, bacon and eggs—plenty of bacon. And don't let her cook it to death. She can crisp yours—but I want something to sink my teeth in."

The instructions dutifully given to Susie, Helen started to put fresh water on her sprouting narcissus bulbs.

A crash from the bathroom!

Darting in she found Warren glaring profanely at a broken bottle. A dark liquid was oozing over the tiled floor into the pink-and-white bath mat.

"Oh, my new bath mat!" she jerked it up. "That bronze shoe polish—it'll never come out! How did you knock it off?"

"Can't get anything from that blooming cabinet without knocking something off. Look at it! Chock full of rubbish that don't belong there. Shoe polish, hat dye, cleaning fluid, and all that face dope. Vanishing cream!" with a snort. "If some of this stuff don't vanish out of here, I'll pitch it out!"

"Where am I to put it?" resentfully. "There's no place in my room. No place to keep anything in this apartment. Hardly any closet room and no——"

"Now don't start on that. Get me some court plaster—bad cut on my chin."

The bad cut was only a scratch from his razor, but Warren was always deeply concerned over his slightest physical hurt.

Finding the court plaster, Helen proceeded to minister to the "wound."

"White, flesh or black? I guess flesh'll suit your style of beauty best."

"Wouldn't be so darn funny if you'd carved a chunk out of your face! Hurry up there—look how it's bleeding."

With proper solicitude, Helen gravely wiped off the drop of blood and applied the court plaster to the microscopic cut.

Then taking the bath mat to the pantry, she tried to wash out the purplish stain.

"Soak it in milk," advised Susie. "That's how I got them rust stains out of them napkins. Can I put them muffins in now?"

"Yes, Mr. Curtis is dressing now," pouring some milk into a finger-bowl.

At an irascible call from the bedroom, she left the stained corner to soak in the milk, and ran in to find Warren rummaging through his closet.

"Where the devil's that light gray suit? One I got in London?"

"Isn't it here?" looking through his many suits hung close on patent hangers. "Oh, that's the one I sent yesterday to have pressed."

"Pressed? That didn't need pressing."

"But you pay to have two pressed every week. The others didn't need it either."

"Well of all the half-portioned featherbrains! Wear 'em out pressing 'em just to get your money's worth!"

Leaving him to grumblingly select another suit, Helen went in to dust the library, always her task when it was Susie's Sunday afternoon off.

Her dull headache weighted her eyes. Were their Saturday night parties worth while if it made them both feel so wretched Sunday mornings?

Warren, finally dressed, stalked in to breakfast with an expression noticeably lacking in amiability.

"Wonder she wouldn't seed the grapefruit," ejecting a seed that Susie's hasty scraping had missed.

"Oh, dear, not so much! Sugar on any acid fruit is very bad. Dr. Arnold says it makes alcohol in the stomach."

"Fine!" sprinkling on another spoonful. "Here's where we put one over on the Prohibitionists. They've no laws against fermentation in your stomach—YET."

"That oven don't bake nothin' even," announced Susie, bringing in a plate of scorched muffins.

"Oh, I told you to put a paper over them—and not to bake them fast."

Susie's mumbled protestations Helen knew were not true. But not wanting to increase the hostility that charged the air, she diplomatically refrained from further comment on the incinerated muffins.

"What's this? You don't call this cream?" Warren glared into the pitcher.

"Dear, he didn't leave any this morning. I told her to give you the top of the milk—but I

should've poured it off myself. She never will—"

As Susie now swung in with the bacon and eggs, Helen discreetly changed the subject.

"Never get a decent breakfast Sunday. Look at that egg!" Warren forked into a hardened yolk. "Fried to death. Punk coffee! And look at this," scraping a charred muffin. "Ought to collect fire insurance on these biscuits."

"I'm sorry, dear. Hereafter, I won't let her start breakfast until you're ready to sit down. Would you like another cup of coffee with condensed milk?"

"No, I wouldn't. No coffee's fit to drink without cream."

The morose silence that followed was broken only by the gleeful romping of Pussy Purr-Mew.

"What's that cat got?" Warren glowered at the wriggling ball of fur.

"Your pocket match-box. That's her latest trick —to paw it off the desk and bring it in here."

"And I was looking for it last night. Well, we'll cut that turn out of her act. Here!" menacingly shoving back his chair.

"Dear, let her have it! She can't hurt it. Don't take it from her."

"Why not?" he snapped.

"She's having such a glorious time," as Pussy Purr-Mew, now on her back, was juggling the match-box with all four paws. "If she can get any pleasure out of that—let her. No one else seems very happy here this morning."

"Eh? What's struck you?" at the betraying quiver in her voice.

"Nothing," tremulously, "except everything always goes wrong Sunday morning. I don't know whether it's because we try to sleep late—or because you've more time to find fault—or what."

"Time to find fault?" explosively. "Well, I'll take time to find fault whenever I get a bum breakfast like this."

"Dear, next Sunday let's try to get up with the thought that things are going right," nervously crumbling her burnt muffin. "Let's take a happier attitude. Let's try a little mental science."

"A happier attitude?" he snorted. "Well burnt biscuits, leathery eggs, and rotten coffee won't make me yelp with joy. While you're plugging away at your mental science, just work in a little CULINARY science—if you want to make a he-Pollyanna out of ME!"

An Evening Acquiring Antiques in a Famous Old Knickerbocker Home

It was a stately old house on lower Fifth Avenue. One of the few old New York residences still lingering in that once-exclusive section.

Menaced on all sides by lofty structures, its doom was imminent. Across the street frowned a towering steel framework, and another, nearer completion, flaunted the sign, "Co-Operative Apartments For Sale."

"I've always wondered who lived here," Helen thrilled with expectancy, as they went up the wide stone steps. "She must have some wonderful old things. I wish she'd take us all through the house."

"Well, she won't," Warren stabbed the bell. "Now you're not to pipe up. I'm here to buy books. Shouldn't have brought you, anyway."

Apparently he was expected, for the elderly butler ushered them through a spacious hall into a great, high, dimly lit room.

"Gloomy old vault," shrugged Warren.

"But it's full of atmosphere! All these old portraits!"

"They're the real thing, all right. She doesn't have to buy her ancestors at an art sale. But I wouldn't like to live with 'em. That's a surly old cuss," gazing at a grim old gentleman in a flowered waistcoat and high stock.

The stern, austere aristocracy of the Stuyvesants

had been emphasized by all the artists. It was an impressive but forbidding group of portraits.

Steps on the stairs. The long velvet curtains parted dramatically. Leaning on the arm of an attendant, entered Miss Cordelia Stuyvesant.

She was eighty at least, but still erectly tall, with the same long face and high-bridged nose of the portraits. Her heavy reddish braids, probably a wig, a black-jetted dinner gown, and many jewels defied her age.

Her greeting was abrupt, but friendly.

Seated in a high-back, winged chair she dismissed her attendant.

"That will do, Hannah. I will ring if I want you."

But hardly had the woman disappeared when, with a shiver, Miss Stuyvesant glanced over her shoulder at the long French window.

"I feel a draught. Is that open? Thank you," as Warren closed it. "Now, you'll find the early law books in that case. You can turn on more lights."

In the strong light from the heavy crystal chandeliers, the room lost some of its grandeur.

The furnishings were a curious hodgepodge of many periods. Some modern Japanese bric-à-brac desecrated a fine old Italian cabinet. A hideous Oriental scarf covered a priceless Chippendale table.

The tops of the low bookcases that lined the walls were cluttered with souvenirs of foreign

travel. Some rare and expensive, others cheaply ordinary.

"No, those on the lower shelf I want to keep," she had taken a chair nearer the case Warren was inspecting. "Mrs. Curtis, if these old books don't interest you, you'll find some magazines back there."

In the rear bay window was a massive desk, piled with late periodicals. Helen took up a London literary monthly, but she was much more interested in watching Miss Stuyvesant, now sitting under the central chandelier.

Her wig, or dyed hair, only hardened her deep-lined face. And her diamonds—rings, chains, brooches, and bracelets—gave a Christmas-tree effect.

Her jetted gown, cut low, a rose velvet ribbon with a diamond clasp encircled her withered throat.

Why not black? wondered Helen. Did no one dare tell her that bright rose only emphasized the sallowness of her shriveled neck?

Above her hung a portrait of a young woman —the features unmistakable. Her own portrait! Helen shuddered at the tragedy of age.

"You're wondering if I ever looked like that?" Miss Stuyvesant turned abruptly, an ironic gleam in her keen eyes. "You needn't flush, my dear, that's what the years do to us all—if we live long enough."

"It's—it's a wonderful portrait," stammered Helen, reddening.

"Painted the year I made my début," musingly. "But I've outlived my generation. All my old friends—they've all gone now. I won't be here much longer. That's why I'm clearing out—making it easier for my executors," cynically. "Well, Mr. Curtis, are any of those worth anything to you?"

"There're a few books here I'd like, but I'd advise you to sell the lot as a collection—or send it to auction. Anderson's or the American Art. If I pick out the best things, the rest won't bring much."

"No, I won't bother sending them to auction," crustily. "I'll sell what I can, and give the rest to some library. There're more in that next case."

"You haven't any old needlework—any samplers?" ventured Helen.

"All my laces are packed away. But there was a sampler here somewhere. Wonder what I did with that? Look in that cabinet."

Eagerly Helen opened the heavy drop-front of the Italian cabinet. Old daguerreotypes, fans, bits of ivory, crystal, and a package of age-yellowed letters.

"It's not there? Then I don't know where it is. The tyranny of things! That's what it comes to—all these things we collect. I'm past that. Now I'm getting rid of them—saving my executors the trouble."

"Could it be in this?" Helen took out a tissue-paper package.

"Open it. First hand me those cigarettes," sharply. "You have one? No?"

Her claw-like, be-diamonded hand tremblingly held the cigarette as Warren applied the match.

"Yes, it's the sampler! A Dutch one!" thrilled Helen, unfolding it.

"What did I do with my glasses? I can't see a thing without them."

Helen found her glasses and they examined the sampler. Two alphabets, a house, a wind-mill, and two quaint Dutch figures were the designs.

"I never really looked at it before. A good one?" peering at Helen.

"Yes, it's very fine work. It's too bad it isn't dated."

"Well, Mr. Curtis," she turned abruptly, "found anything else?"

"No, nothing that interests me. Just those six I laid out."

"What're they worth?" was her blunt demand.

"Well, Miss Stuyvesant, I'll give eighty dollars for the six. But you might get more, if you send them to auction."

"But I'm not going to send them to auction," with sharp finality. "You can have them and welcome. I'll take your word for it that that's a fair price."

As Warren drew out his check-book, Helen, standing back of Miss Stuyvesant, nodded to the sampler and frantically signaled "twenty" with her fingers.

"How 'bout that sampler, Miss Stuyvesant?" yielding to her pantomimic appeal. "Would you sell that? Mrs. Curtis is dippy about old needlework."

"Mrs. Haverhill, who gave me that, isn't dead yet. What if she should ask for it? I might say I couldn't find it," humorously.

Then, riveting her shrewd eyes on Helen,

"You want it very much? Yes, you're all enthusiasm. You have the real collector's flair. I used to have it, but I don't want anything any more—except a little peace from this villainous rheumatism. Let me see that sampler again."

Helen handed it to her, with her glasses that had slipped to the floor.

"What'll you give for it?" her brusque directness was disconcerting.

"I thought about twenty," flushed Helen. "You see, it isn't dated."

"Good little buyer, aren't you? Well, take it! I won't miss it."

"Then I'll make the check an even hundred," Warren uncapped his pen.

"It's half-past nine, Miss Cordelia," an attendant entered with a medicine bottle and glass. "You should've had this at nine."

"Take it away," waving aside the tray. "It's some stupid medicine every half hour. Doesn't do me any good."

"But, Miss Cordelia, the doctor said——"

"I don't care what the doctor said! Take it away," pounding with her cane.

"No, I don't believe in medicine, either," glowed Helen. "It's all mental. If we'd only learn to think right—we'd never be sick."

"I've my own philosophy about life. It's carried me over some rough places. Oh, yes, I've had my share of trouble—more than my share."

"Now, we don't want to tire you, Miss Stuyvesant," Warren broke in.

"You're not tiring me. I like to see people. I'm going to Carlsbad next month, if I live that long. Just touch that bell and Morton will see you out."

"Guess we can find our way," Warren took up his books. "No, don't get up, Miss Stuyvesant. Glad you're going to Carlsbad—ocean trip'll do you good."

"It used to. I loved to go abroad—went every year. But now—" her bony hand gestured her indifference about everything now.

With the aid of her cane she hobbled to the door and saw them into the hall.

Down the stately steps, and they came out into the soft, mist-blurred night.

"Oh, dear, I feel so sorry for her! With all her money and fame—just a lonely old woman," Helen shivered.

"Now you don't have to worry about her," shrugged Warren. "That's just her pose. She's had a mighty interesting life—got a lot to look back on."

"To look back on? Is that all we have when

we're old? Just memories? And when she sat there under her portrait! Oh, it was so ghastly and pathetic!"

"She didn't seem pathetic to me. Pretty well dolled up for an old lady."

"That's what made it so ghastly—all those diamonds. Seven bracelets—I counted them! And wasn't that a wig?"

"How'd I know? I went there to buy books—not to look her over."

"No, no, I don't mean to criticize. But, dear, when I'm old, if I want to dress like that—don't let me!"

"Don't worry, you'll not wear seven diamond bracelets! You won't have 'em—unless you get somebody else to cough up."

"Dear, I know just how I'm going to dress! Quaint old-fashioned taffeta gowns with real lace fichus, and a cunning little cap on my white hair. I'll look like that picture of Whistler's mother—only more so, because I'm little."

"Huh, you may not be so little when you're eighty! Probably be fat, weigh a ton, and doll yourself up like a Floradora Soubrette. A cap on your white hair?" he chuckled. "If you've any hair, I bet it'll be dyed, bobbed, and permanently frizzed—or you'll wear a wig over your bald spots. Now don't throw bouquets as to how you'll dress when you're old. The older they are—the younger the get-up."

Then with a grin, as he looked down and tucked her arm through his:

"But don't you worry, Kitten. You suit me pretty well now, and I guess you will when you're eighty—even if you do trick yourself out like a fussed-up Christmas tree!"

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